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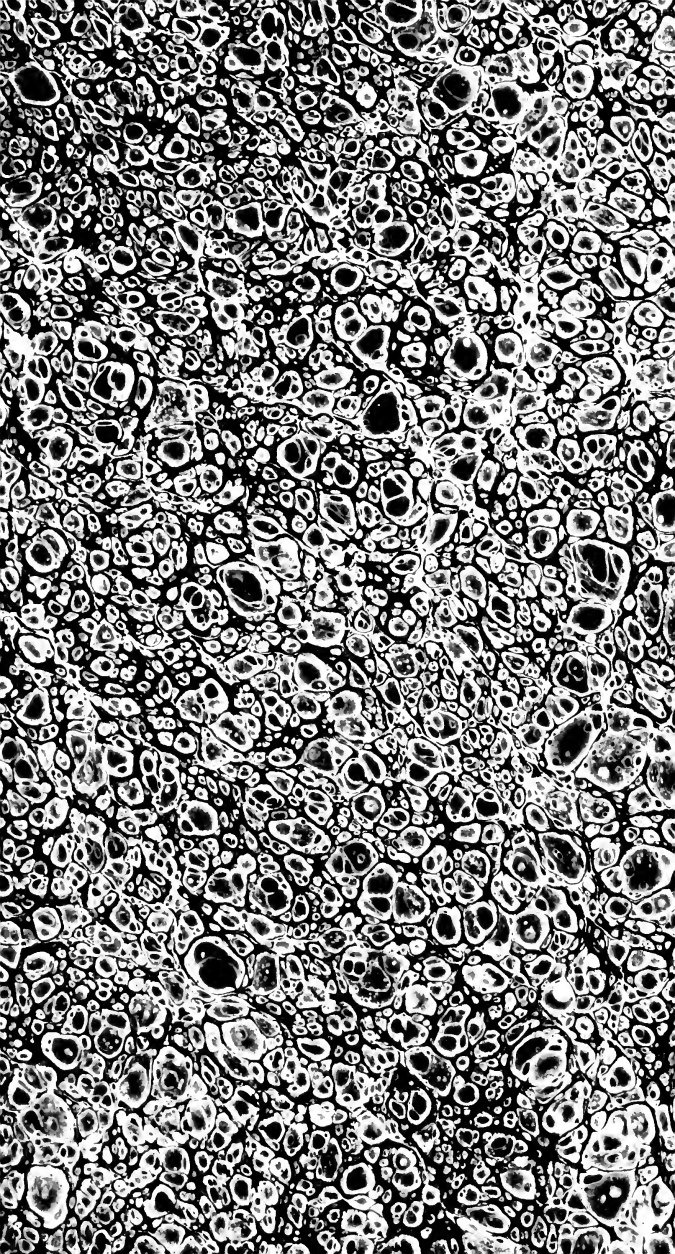
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Section

Number







AN
INQUIRY
INTO THE
NATURE AND DESIGN
OF
CHRIST'S TEMPTATION
IN THE
WILDERNESS.

BY HUGH FARMER.

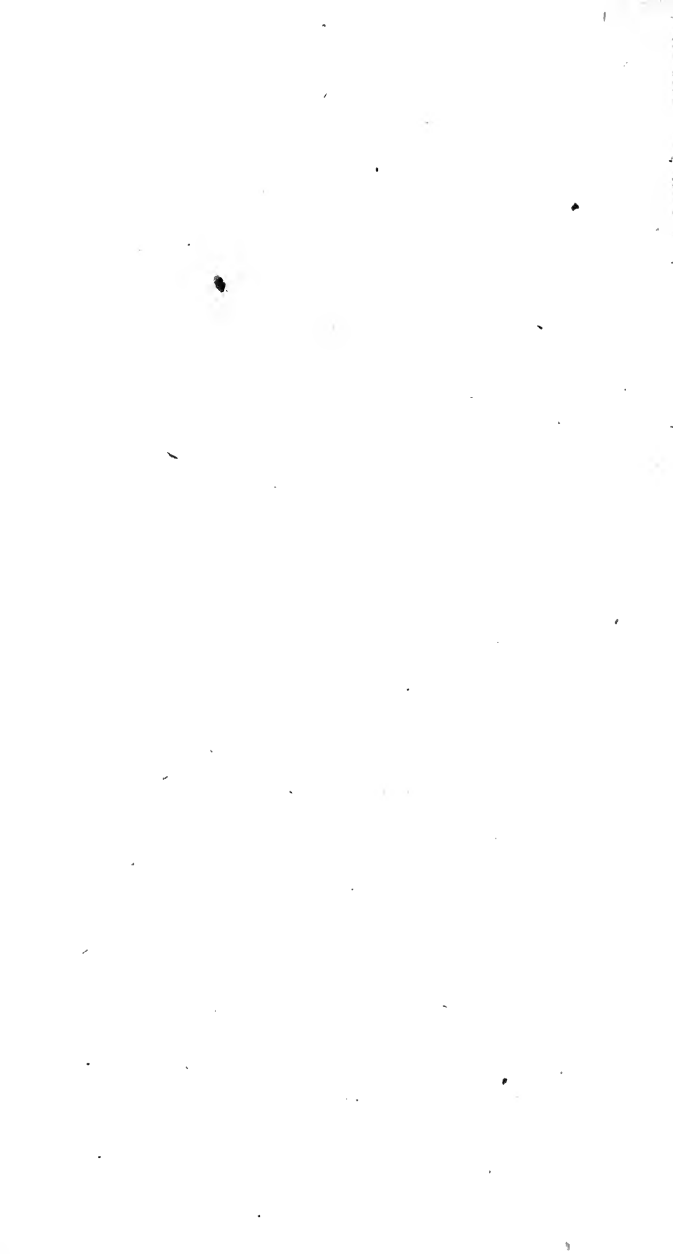
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1805.



P R E F A C E.

THE various expositions hitherto given of our Saviour's temptation in the wilderness being attended with considerable difficulties, any modest attempt to discover and establish one less exceptionable, may hope to be received with candour. How far the author of the following sheets may have succeeded in such an endeavour, is submitted to the judgment of the public. He, however, persuades himself, are right, however he may have failed in the execution of his undertaking.

Many former writers upon this subject have rejected the literal scheme, and have asserted it to be a *diabolical vision* or illusion, but none of them which have fallen under the author's notice have considered it as a *divine vision**; the want of which has prevented a discernment of the *wise and benevolent intention* of these visionary scenes, as symbolical predictions and representations of the principal trials and difficulties attending Christ's public ministry. These are the peculiar points which the present performance endeavours to establish.

But though the interpretation here advanced be *new*†, which may be a sufficient reason for submitting it to public examination, yet unless it appears to have its foundation in truth, and to set an obscure part of the evangelical history in a less exceptionable, more

* See the Inquiry, Sect. II. p. 37, note *.

† Ibid.

useful, and honourable light, the author wishes it may be rejected.

He will only add, that if the principles upon which this interpretation is founded are just, they are applicable to various passages in the Old Testament, and may enable us to obviate the objections to which the literal construction of them is liable.

Walthamstow,

June 23, 1761.

ADVERTISEMENT

TO THE

FOURTH EDITION.

THIS edition is carefully reprinted from the third and last, published by Mr. Farmer himself. An Index of the Texts of Scripture explained or referred to is now added; and it is presumed that this volume, in connexion with the "DISSERTATION ON MIRACLES," and the "ESSAY ON DEMONIACS," printed in the same size and type, and which were exceedingly scarce, will be deemed acceptable to the public at large, as well as to the respectable SOCIETY by whose order and at whose expence they have all been reprinted.

*Gloicester-Place, Camden Town,
Aug. 1, 1805.*

J. JOYCE.

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AN
INQUIRY
INTO THE
NATURE AND DESIGN
OF
CHRIST'S TEMPTATION
IN THE WILDERNESS.

MAT. iv. 1—11.

Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil.—And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterwards an hungred.—And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.—But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.—Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple,—And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee, and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.—Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt

B *tempt*

tempt the Lord thy God — Again the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them :—And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.—Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.—Then the devil leaveth him, and behold, angels came and ministered unto him. See likewise Mark i. 12, 13. Luke iv. 1—13.

THE detection of error being a great help towards the discovery of truth; it will be proper, before we attempt to settle the true nature and design of Christ's temptation, to consider what objections lie against the several explications which have hitherto been given of this part of the gospel history. Should those objections appear to be just, we shall, at least, see the necessity of looking out for some new interpretation.

SECTION I.

IT has been generally supposed, that the evangelical history of our Lord's temptation is to be understood as a narrative of outward transactions: that the devil tempted Christ in person, appeared to him in a visible form, spoke to him with an audible voice, and removed him corporeally from one place to another:

which opinion seems liable to the following amongst other objections.

I. It is unsuitable to the sagacity and policy of the evil spirit. “Why the devil would at all assault our Lord, and what advantage he could possibly hope to gain over him*,” has always been acknowledged to be a great difficulty, by the advocates of the common interpretation. But this difficulty is greatly increased by a circumstance which they generally overlook; viz. the *manner* in which, on their hypothesis, the devil proposed his temptations to our Saviour. For this history, if understood of outward occurrences, manifestly supposes that the tempter came to him in person and appeared before him in a visible form, and under his own proper character. It represents him as acting under this character, by proposing and urging temptations, such as could proceed from none but an evil being. Now, with what prospect of success could he tempt our Lord, if he thus exposed himself to open view? By a personal and undisguised appearance, he can never hope to prevail over the feeblest virtue. It is generally admitted, that, to succeed against frail mortals, he has recourse to *secret suggestions*, such as they do not distinguish from the natural and genuine offspring of their own minds; and thus conceals the hand which offers the temptation. Could he then expect, that the illustrious personage, whom he acknowledges as the Son of God, and who

* See Dr. Clarke as cited in the Appendix, No. 1.

had been so lately proclaimed by a voice from heaven as such, and who was filled with the Spirit without measure, should comply with his temptations, notwithstanding his appearing to him in person, so as to be certainly known and distinguished under his proper character*?

If

* To evade this difficulty (which most persons have felt), some have conjectured that the devil now appeared under several *borrowed* characters and forms, and, by this imposition upon our Saviour, hoped the more easily to convince him of the innocence and reasonableness of his proposals, and to deceive him into a compliance. The late very learned Archbishop of Canterbury in particular maintains, "that the devil did not appear what he was, for that would entirely have frustrated his intent." Serm. vol. ii. p. 114. Dr. Chandler likewise says, "that the devil appeared probably *not as himself*, that would have been at once to have prevented the effect of his temptation." Serm. vol. iii. p. 178. Both these writers imagine, that the devil, when he came to Christ in a visible form, assumed the resemblance of a *good angel*. (Chandler, p. 177, 178. Secker, p. 113.) Many others have conjectured, that he appeared before Christ in the form of a *man*. Conjectures are to be regarded, according to the degree in which they are reasonable or plausible. If they are merely arbitrary, and made from necessity, or because men cannot get over a difficulty without their assistance; and especially if they are not only groundless, but in any degree improbable; they ought not to be received, and should be regarded only as confessions of the distress of those who have recourse to them. With regard to the particular conjectures in question, it is natural to ask, What foundation is there for them? Where do we read of the devil's appearing to Christ either as a good man, or as a good angel, or under any other disguise? Is there any one circumstance of the history, that favours the supposition of his appearing before Christ under a borrowed character? If there be no foundation for this conjecture, it must be considered as arbitrary, and made from necessity alone. Farther, it

is

If we proceed to examine the particular nature of Christ's successive temptations, it will appear yet more incredible,

is not only unsupported by the history, but contradicted by many circumstances of it, and is highly improbable in itself. How could the devil hope to deceive our Lord, by transforming himself into an angel of light, when his very tempting him to idolatry was an evident demonstration of his being a fiend of hell? Or, how in this case could he hope to pass for a *good man*? Could he even wish that Christ should mistake him for a man, when it must have made his promise of universal empire appear ridiculous? With regard to our Saviour; Is it likely that he considered any one of the temptations, and least of all the last, as proceeding from any *good being*, whether human or angelic; when he rejected them all as *evil* and *impious* in their very nature, and the last with the highest detestation? Is it not, on the contrary, more likely that Christ ascribed these temptations to some *evil being*? This conclusion, which is so probable in its own nature, is confirmed by the history: which represents the tempter as appearing and acting under his proper character; and consequently without affecting any disguise. And instead of giving any the least intimation of Christ's being ignorant who it was that tempted him; the history even represents Christ as knowing him, and, as occasion required, calling him by name, *Get thee behind me, Satan*, Luke iv. 8. This was said in answer to the *second* temptation, according to the order of St. Luke, who, though we allow he has perhaps neglected the true order, would not have done it, if thereby he had led us into an error with regard to our Saviour, and represented him as knowing the tempter sooner than he really did. The gentlemen whom we oppose, universally allow that Christ knew who proposed the third temptation; and this, if it does not create a presumption that he knew him sooner, certainly deprives them of the benefit of their conjecture, where they most want it, in accounting for that temptation.

The foregoing objections conclude with peculiar force against the two eminent writers mentioned at the beginning of this note. Dr. Chandler acknowledges, "that Christ was solicited to *sin* and to crimes

incredible, that they should be proposed to him with any prospect of success, in the manner plainly implied in the literal scheme of interpretation. In the first temptation, in which he is solicited to turn stones into bread, nothing is promised on the part of Satan to gain Christ's consent; for the miraculous act he

crimes of a very heinous nature," p. 176. 202: "that in the first temptation he well discerned the treachery of the devil's counsel," p. 193, and that the impostor was detected, p. 196. With regard to the second temptation, he affirms, "that Christ understood the design of the devil's suggestion, and the fallacy of his argument; and that he was tempted to an act of real insolence and impiety, of criminal presumption and folly," p. 209, 210, 211. And Dr. Secker says, with regard to the same temptation, "Christ clearly discerned the intention of the tempter," p. 116. Concerning the third temptation, Dr. Chandler justly observes, "The present suggestion was an act of immediate impiety against God," p. 221, 222. And at this time, according to Dr. Secker, p. 119, Christ "told the hypocrite, (meaning the devil,) he knew him well for the adversary of God." Now what end could it answer for the devil to appear under any disguise before Christ, who so well knew his proper character in the very first temptation, as well as in every succeeding one? Why did he personate a good angel, when openly tempting Christ to sin, and making undisguised proposals to commit, what appeared to Christ, and could not but appear to every one, the most audacious and shocking act of impiety? Surely, if the devil had assumed the disguise of a celestial spirit, he would have taken better care to preserve that character, than to demand for himself the worship due to God alone. In a word, the supposition of the devil's appearing before Christ as a good angel, is not only destitute of every shadow of support, but highly absurd in itself, and repugnant to the history. I only add, that if the devil had disguised himself with the view here supposed, these temptations would have been trials rather of the *understanding* than of the *heart*, or of our Lord's piety and virtue; the former of which is very different from the scripture idea of temptations.

was prompted to perform, depended entirely upon the exertion of his own power. Indeed, so far as this miracle was proper to satisfy Christ's hunger, it seems to carry its own inforcement. But certainly he would not be the more, but the less, ready to satisfy his hunger by this mean upon the open application of an implacable enemy, and a fiend of hell*. This was a circumstance that could answer no other end than to create a prejudice against the proposal, and furnish a reason for rejecting it. Now could the devil *intend* to defeat his own temptation?

In the second temptation (here, as in the sequel, I follow the order of St. Matthew) the devil urges Christ to throw himself headlong from the summit of the temple at Jerusalem. In this, as in the former case, he does not undertake to do any thing himself for the honour or service of Christ, and yet solicits him to follow his directions. However, there is this difference in the two cases: in the former, the thing itself which was advised might have been the means of his support; in the latter, it might have issued in his destruction. Should it be urged, "that if Christ had thrown himself down from the top of the temple,

* This reasoning has lately received the sanction of a writer of distinguished learning and abilities. For, speaking of David's numbering the people, he says, *If the devil had bid him do it, I suppose he might have seen the cloven foot, and would scarce have followed the measure for the sake of the adviser.* Dr. Chandler's Review of the History of David, p. 225. This reasoning concludes more strongly in the case of Christ than in that of David, because the devil is not supposed to have appeared in person to the latter.

and been preserved unhurt, his miraculous preservation would have been an attestation to his character as the Son of God :” I admit that the proposal in this view of it was in itself very alluring. But under the peculiar circumstances here attending it, the devil could scarcely hope to see it embraced. The inference drawn from Christ’s miraculous preservation must be very uncertain upon the common hypothesis, which admits that the devil did by his own power remove Christ corporeally from the wilderness to the top of the temple *. For, what greater power could be necessary to the preservation of Christ, in throwing himself down from that eminence, than the devil is supposed to have exerted in raising him to it †? How then could it have been more certainly concluded from hence that Jesus was the Son of God, than that the devil was so too, had he thought fit to make the pretension? Besides, if Christ had cast himself down from the temple, the devil, who was present, and had

* Thus Grotius in particular compares this case to that of Philip, who was caught away by the Spirit from the eunuch to Azotus. On Matt. iv. 5. he says, *παραλαμβάνει*, ut Philippum Dei Spiritus, Acts viii. 39. And Dr. Benson affirms (Life of Christ, p. 35.) that the devil *hurried Christ through the air, and carried him from the wilderness to the temple*. Some however understand the word *παραλαμβάνει*, in this place, in a different sense. See below, p. 13, note *, and p. 19, note †.

† Accordingly Dr. Secker (Serm. vol. ii. p. 116, 117.), very consistently with his asserting that the tempter *conveyed Christ through the air* to one of the battlements of the temple, allows that he had hereby shewn himself *qualified for so noble a miracle* as that of his preservation, in case he had thrown himself down from thence.

(as

(as is generally supposed) now assumed a visible form, might have done the very same thing, and thus their respective claims, whatever they had been, would have stood upon a level. What inducement then could Christ have for a compliance with the proposal suggested? would he be disposed to gratify Satan, by doing an act at his mere motion? It is absurd to suppose it. Was he to acquire any glory or advantage to himself? No; on the contrary, he must have incurred the infamy of having entered the lists with the devil, without acquiring any superiority over that prisoner of hell; which must have been a powerful motive to a refusal rather than a compliance.

With regard to the third temptation, usually accounted the greatest of all, the offer of the kingdoms of the world with all their glory, it seems as little to deserve the name of a temptation as that which we last considered. The great prophet of the Christian church could not be ignorant, that the father of lies, whatever he might boast, had no power to dispose of the empire of the world; and that *the most High rules in the kingdoms of men, and gives them to whomsoever he will**. Nor can it be pretended that Christ was ignorant by whom *this* temptation was proposed, whatever was the case with regard to the *others*, for in his reply he calls him Satan†. So that, were we to allow ‡ that the devil, by assuming the appearance

* Dan. iv. 17.

† See above, p. 4, note *.

‡ According to the conjectures of Dr. Doddridge, Dr. Macknight, and many others.

of a good angel, hoped to deceive Jesus, yet he was certainly mistaken in his measures ; Jesus knew who he was, and consequently that he had no power to bestow what he so liberally promised*. Now the largest offer which can be conceived, is the offer of nothing, if he who makes it be unable to make it good : and if he is known to be so, by the person to whom it is made, the offer will be deemed an insult rather than a temptation, and will provoke either scorn or resentment. Could the devil then hope by such contemptuous treatment to engage the Son of God to listen to his accursed councils, and to seduce him to an act of the highest dishonour to his heavenly Father, such as no one can think of without horror,—the falling down and paying divine homage to this infernal spirit ?

If the foregoing reflections are just, the common explication of this history gives such an account of Christ's temptations, of the two last especially, as is subversive of their main intention, disarming them of all inducement to a compliance, and even furnishing the strongest motives for rejecting them. All the

* “ Jesus knew the devil well for the adversary of God, who had granted to no created being, much less to him, the honours, or the authority, which he claimed. Secker's Serm. vol. ii. p. 119. And Dr. Chandler, (Serm. vol. iii. p. 218. 222.) though he thought the devil's offering Christ the throne of Israel, and the kingdoms of the neighbouring nations, was worthy his craft and subtilty ; yet tells us that Jesus let him know, that the power he claimed of disposing the kingdoms of the earth was VAIN and PRESUMPTUOUS.

use I would make of these reflections in this place, is to observe, that this interpretation represents the old serpent as acting quite out of character : inasmuch as it supposes him to be as perfectly void of policy as he is of goodness ; and that he used the least art and address in proposing and inforcing his temptations, in a case in which the greatest would have been insufficient to insure his success*. It is more material to observe,

II. That

* Our learned divines, in order to account for the devil's assaulting our Lord with any hope of success, generally suppose, that he was somewhat *uncertain* whether our Lord was indeed the Messiah, and admit, that *unless the tempter had been in doubt as to the character of Jesus, it is not to be imagined he should have attempted to seduce him at all.* Dr. Macknight's Commentary, and Dr. Clarke, vol. i. Serm. 93. It is not, I hope, inconsistent with the deference due to these gentlemen, to observe, 1. That upon the common hypothesis concerning this temptation and the author of it, there is no reason to believe he was ignorant or doubtful who Jesus was. If the devil is well acquainted with the scriptures, and particularly with the ancient prophecies concerning the Messiah ; if he knew all the wonderful circumstances which accompanied the birth of Jesus, and was so lately a witness to the testimonies borne to him from Heaven, both by the descent of the spirit, and by the voice which proclaimed him the Son of God ; he could not but know with certainty who Jesus was. This Dr. Lightfoot has fully proved, in his first volume, p. 503. fol. edit. Accordingly these words, which introduce two of his temptations, do not express doubt, but assurance, *If thou be*, that is, *seeing thou art* (or *inasmuch as thou art*) *the Son of God.* It is here taken for granted that Jesus was the Son of God ; and his being so is the very reason by which the devil urges him to comply with his proposals : " Since you are the Messiah, it is fit you should act as such, and

II. That this explication is very ill calculated to promote either the honour of Christ, or the instruction and consolation of his disciples. We can scarcely preserve upon our minds a sufficient reverence of the sanctity and dignity of the Redeemer, when we behold him in such familiar conference with, and under the power of, an unclean spirit, who at pleasure

and exert your divine power in turning stones into bread, and in flying down from the temple." Thus, as Dr. Lightfoot observes (*ubi supra*), the word *if* is used in the speech of Lamech, Gen. iv. 23. *If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold*, which was with Lamech a thing undoubted. He who desires the fullest evidence that *εἰ* and *εἰπερ* are frequently affirmative particles, may consult Locke and Doddridge on Ephes. iii. 2. Peirce on Col. i. 23. and Taylor on Rom. viii. 9. but especially Noldii Concordant. Partic. under the correspondent Hebrew particle *כִּי* which is often rendered *certe, omnino, quia, quandoquidem, quod*. Even Dr. Macknight himself, who in p. 64 of his Commentary (second edition) urges these words, *If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence*, in support of the devil's being in doubt as to the character of Jesus, does in p. 66. explain them in their true sense, though it subverts his own hypothesis: *SINCE thou art the Son of God, thou shouldst cast thyself down.*

2: Were we to allow that the devil was in doubt who Jesus was, and that otherwise he could not possibly have hoped to gain any advantage over him; this will not account for his proposing his temptations in an *open and visible manner*; nay, it proves that this manner ought of all others to have been most carefully avoided, because the least likely to succeed. For certainly the strongest temptations of the devil are those wherein he least appears. I am not therefore so happy as to be able to acquiesce in the explication these gentlemen have given of the motives which induced the devil to undertake this temptation; because in the method he took he could have no expectation, nor scarce a thought, of success; at least he could not have taken a more likely method to miscarry.

transports

transports * his sovereign and his judge from place to place; raises him to the most conspicuous stations to expose him to public derision, and wantonly and arrogantly propounds to him one foolish enterprise after another †. It fills us with horror as well as astonish-

* Those who are of opinion that the devil did not transport Christ through the air, but only led him on foot from place to place (see below, p. 19, note †), would, I should think, find it difficult to account for Christ's suffering himself to be led to the temple (where the Jews always resorted) and back again through the streets of Jerusalem, in such company. Could the inhabitants have been witnesses to a sight so wonderful and so horrible, and yet take no notice of it? Would not their seeing Christ in company with the devil, at the very *first opening of his ministry*, before he had afforded them any evidences of his divine mission, and while they were strangers to his genuine character, have necessarily made even upon honest minds strong impressions to his disadvantage? Would not such a sight, at this season especially, have raised some suspicion of his being an associate and confederate with the devil? Now would Christ unnecessarily create a prejudice against himself in good minds, or give any occasion to his enemies to blaspheme? Without any such ground for the accusation, as his being seen in familiar conference with demons, his enemies ascribed his cure of demoniacs to the assistance of the prince of demons. But the very supposition of Christ's suffering himself to be led about by the devil, in places of the most public resort, and of the most sacred nature, for no imaginable end whatever, does so shock the human imagination, that one would think there could be no occasion to confute it. There would be scarce decency in exposing it as it deserves.

† It has indeed been said, "that it was no more unworthy the Son of God to undergo the assaults of *evil spirits*, than to suffer indignities and death from the hands of *wicked men*." But, by partaking of flesh and blood, he became liable to the latter, and nothing but a miracle could have saved him from them. But with regard to the
former

astonishment to consider farther, that during all this transaction, Christ must have yielded voluntarily to the mere motion and instigation of the devil. For though it was by the Spirit of God that he was carried into the wilderness, yet it was by the devil that he was conveyed from thence to the temple, and placed upon its battlements, a most dangerous and formidable eminence* ! And, therefore, as the devil could have no power over our Lord, unless by his free consent, Christ must have been accessory to his own dishonour, danger, and temptation†. Such a conduct as this would have been the more unworthy of him, as no good end could be answered by it, either

former, it is certain, that such assaults of the devil as these are supposed to have been, are not the lot of humanity. Besides, the most important ends of Christ's coming into the world required his submission to death ; but no valuable end whatever was answered by his putting himself entirely into the power of the devil, in the manner here pretended.

* Some parts of the temple (being built upon the edge of a rock, under which was a valley of a prodigious depth) were of so vast a height, that it was impossible to look down without making the head to swim ; nor could the sight reach to the bottom ; as we learn from Josephus, *Antiq. Jud.* l. 15. c. 11. § 5.

† Should it be said that Christ had an order from God to suffer himself to be brought into this dangerous situation, the assertion could not be proved from the text. Nor is it likely any such order was given, because no good end could be answered by it. Christ might be carried into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil ; but not that he might in any measure *yield* to his temptations. Nevertheless, this would have been the case had Christ yielded to the persuasions of the devil to accompany him to different places, in order to his being tempted.

with

with respect to himself or his followers. His own character would have been degraded rather than exalted. The temptations themselves to which he was exposed were very far from carrying any force, as was observed above: what extraordinary merit then, nay, what virtue in the lowest degree, could there be in resisting them? And if there were no proper temptation presented to Christ, none that could serve as an evidence or exercise of his obedience, what suitable consolation or useful instruction, under real and powerful temptations, can his followers derive from this history?

What has been already offered under this and the foregoing heads, will enable us to form a right judgment concerning the reasons commonly offered for Christ's submitting to be *tempted by the devil* in the manner here supposed. 1. It has been, I think, generally asserted, that the apostle *expressly* assigns this as one reason, that hereby he might * *be made like unto his brethren*, and become a *merciful and faithful high priest, for in that he himself has suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted*. Dr. Chandler † thinks the history of our Saviour's temptation is evidently referred to in the following passage: *He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin* ‡. It is impossible here to forbear observing how ready all men are, at least occasionally, to be governed by the sound rather than

* Heb. ii. 14—18. † P. 175. Compare Dr. Secker, p. 110.

‡ Heb. iv. 15.

the sense of Scripture : for it is manifest that the apostle in these passages refers to those temptations and sufferings to which the Hebrew Christians were exposed by their new profession. To encourage them under these trials, he properly reminds them that Christ had been exercised with the very same, called out to struggle not only with all the common difficulties of human life, but also with the severest persecutions. In this respect there was a real resemblance between his case and theirs. And this is the subject of the apostle's discourse. That he does not refer to Christ's temptation in the wilderness is farther evident from hence, that by undergoing that temptation he was not *made like unto his brethren, nor tempted like as we are*. The most learned advocates of the common hypothesis contend, "that this temptation was *extraordinary* in its nature," and carried on in an *open manner**. "The tempter," say they, "came to Jesus in a visible form : *a thing, which we have neither any reason from hence to fear will ever be our own case, or to believe is ever the case of other common men*†." They likewise assert, that when we are tempted by invisible powers, the temptations are *secret*‡, and not distinguishable by us from those which arise of themselves in our own breasts§. Now, if we are not tempted as Christ was in the wilderness, according to the common explication of this history, then the fitness or necessity of his being

* Dr. Chandler, p. 176, 177.

‡ Dr. Chandler, p. 185. 197.

† Dr. Secker, p. 113.

§ Dr. Secker, p. 107.

made like unto his brethren is most improperly urged as a ground or reason for his being so tempted*.

2. A farther reason assigned for his submitting to be tempted in the manner he is generally supposed to have been in the wilderness, is, that his example might be a complete pattern of every virtue. But, according to the common explication of Christ's temptations, they did not display any of his virtues to advantage, as we have already proved, nor was his behaviour under them proper for the imitation of his followers. For, if the devil's bringing him into circumstances of danger, and placing him upon the brink of a stupendous precipice, from whence he was to be instigated to throw himself down, and from whence, indeed, it was difficult not to fall,—if this could not have been effected without his free consent and choice, his example may be injurious, rather than beneficial, to such creatures as we are, who are more likely to preserve our innocence by flying from temptation than by encountering it; and who are accordingly warned never voluntarily to rush upon it, but, as far as we are able, to prevent its approach. Can it then be conceived that Christ, if he knew the devil, would suffer himself to be transported by him to a scene of the greatest danger, whereby he would ener-

* See Sect. IV. No. I. It is very remarkable that there should be no reference at all in any part of the New Testament to Christ's temptation in the wilderness, if it be, what, according to the received interpretation it certainly was, the most astonishing and miraculous event which ever befel him.

vate all his exhortations to caution in declining it, and more especially that excellent maxim delivered on this very occasion, *Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God*, which he might have inculcated to much greater advantage by refusing to have left the wilderness? If Christ was ignorant who his companion was, as some endeavour to persuade us, would he go along with a *stranger*, go with him in quest of temptations, and run into the way of them? There are many who contend for the literal interpretation of this history, from a regard to the honour of Christ and to the benefit of his disciples; whereas in truth it is equally injurious to both, and subverts the very foundation on which they rest, the strength and reality of these temptations. And supposing the temptations to have been real and powerful, the conduct here ascribed to Christ is not calculated for the imitation or instruction of his followers*.

* Dr. Secker, p. 110, thinks it may be said very safely, that, *for any thing we know, it might behove Christ,—to give the enemy all advantages and opportunities, in order to make his defeat more conspicuous.* But may it not be said, both with more safety and more probability, *that it did not behove Christ to give the devil any advantage*, that so his example might be instructive to those who are required to watch and pray that they enter not into temptation, and forbidden to give Satan any advantage? In reality, no advantage was given to the devil, by Christ's allowing himself to be assaulted by him in the manner commonly supposed; and consequently no peculiar honour could result from his victory over him. The very supposition of Christ's giving the enemy all advantages, in order to make his defeat more conspicuous, implies his knowing who he was, which at once disarmed his temptations of all their power.

III. It

III. It is a farther objection to the common opinion, that it ascribes to the devil the performance of the greatest miracles. (1.) It supposes that the devil, by nature a spiritual and invisible agent, has a power of assuming at pleasure a corporeal or visible form *, and of speaking with an audible voice, though there is no more ground from experience (our sole instructor in the established laws of nature) to ascribe this power to the devil, than to ascribe life to the inanimate, or speech to the brute creation, and though the scripture represents the appearance or vision of a spiritual being as an incontestable miracle; for Zacharias was struck dumb for not giving credit to such an evidence of a divine interposition †. (2.) It supposes farther, that the devil has a power of conveying men from place to place, and that he did actually exert this power over his great Lord, by transporting him through the air ‡, from the wilderness

* It has been taken for granted by Dr. Secker, Dr. Chandler, and other learned writers, that the devil has this power; but this point has never been proved, nor do I remember that any one of them has ever attempted to prove it.

† Luke i. 25.

‡ I here argue on the supposition that the devil did not lead Christ on foot from place to place, but conveyed him through the air; because the advocates of what is called the literal scheme generally suppose this to have been the case. Dr. Chandler (p. 212.) indeed, and several others, plead, that the word *παρалаμβανει* imports no more than to *conduct a person*, or to *take him with us as a companion* (in which sense it is used Matt. xvii. 1.), and that there was no miracle performed on this occasion, the devil only going before

ness to the summit of the Jewish temple; and from thence to the top of an exceeding high mountain.

But

fore Christ, and either persuading or constraining him to follow. These gentlemen, however, seem to me to mistake the argument. For, I apprehend, those who hold that the devil conveyed Christ through the air, do not ground their opinion on the meaning of *παραλαμβάνει* (which certainly can never determine the manner in which Christ was taken to the wing of the temple), but on the circumstances of the history, which, to their apprehension, require this interpretation. Whoever carefully considers the matter, will soon see that it was impossible the devil should take Christ to the top of the Jewish temple without a miracle. It appears by the description given of the temple by Josephus (*Antiq. l. 15. c. 11. § 3. 5.* and *B. J. l. 5. c. 5.*), and from some passages from other Jewish writers (cited by Dr. Whitby on Luke xxii. 52.), that it was so encompassed by walls, and so constantly guarded, that all access to it was impracticable, but by such persons, and under such conditions, as the law allowed. Now by law no *foreigner* could pass the first inclosure or court under pain of death; the *Jewish people* could not pass the second; the *priests* alone could enter the third. The temple itself was within this court; from which Christ was excluded, not being a Jewish priest. As to the devil, those who know under what different disguises he imposed upon Christ (see above, p. 4, note *), can with equal certainty inform us by what stratagems he might advance forward to the temple. Christ, however, *in whom there was no guile*, could not have been permitted to follow. With regard to the temple itself, properly so called, on the top of it *there were spikes, with sharp points, to prevent so much as a bird from resting upon it.* The wings of the temple stretched out on either side, at the eastern front of it, which was by far the most magnificent, and commanded a view of the entire body of worshippers. These wings were twenty cubits higher than the temple; the height of the temple being 100 cubits, and the height of the *πτερυγίων* 120 cubits, at the top of which, the history (according to the common interpretation) affirms, the devil did set our Saviour. That the word *πτερυγίων* denotes the wing (not the

But this could not have been done, but by repeated displays of a power truly miraculous, and even equally stupendous

the *pinnacle*) of the temple, that most valuable expositor Dr. Lightfoot long since observed (Works, vol. ii. p. 130.). And his opinion was adopted by the learned Dr. Prideaux (Connect. vol. i. p. 200.), and lately by Dr. Benson (Life of Christ, p. 35). These circumstances serve to shew that the devil could not lead Christ on foot to the top of one of these wings of the temple, in the manner some allege; but must (if he placed him there at all) have carried him through the air, or afforded him some other miraculous assistance (unless they can suppose that the devil first applied for leave to the officers and guards of the temple, which was very unlikely to have been asked, or obtained, or passed over in silence). And as the sacred writers were well acquainted with all these circumstances, they could never design to affirm that the devil did what they knew was impossible to be done. Dr. Macknight (to avoid this difficulty) maintains, that it was *from the battlement of one of the cloisters that the devil desired Jesus to throw himself down*; and he affirms (but without producing any authority) *that the people were at liberty to walk on the roof of the cloisters*. This last assertion seems to me somewhat improbable, both because the cloisters were *sacred buildings*; and because no such liberty as the doctor speaks of, was allowed even with regard to *common houses*, to which no peculiar reverence was due. For the door which opened upon the roof was constantly kept shut, to prevent their domestic animals from daubing the terrace, and thereby spoiling the water which fell from thence into the cisterns below the court; and the stairs which conducted to the roof were not placed on the outside of the house, but either in the porch, or at the entrance into the court; and consequently strangers could not have access to them without the consent of the family. See Dr. Shaw's Travels, as cited by Dr. Macknight in his Harmony, part I. p. 123. 2d ed. But whether the people were at liberty to walk upon the roofs of the cloisters is a point of no importance, because the evangelists are not speaking of any of the *cloisters*, not one of which was called the *wing of the temple*. The word *τεμενιον* is used with great latitude

stupendous with that by which Philip was transported from Gaza to Azotus* ; and by no means inferior, as was observed above, to that which would have been necessary to the preservation of Christ, had he thrown himself down from the temple, in proof of his being the Messiah† ; though his answer implies, that his preservation must have depended on the interposition of God, whom it was not lawful to tempt. (3.) It supposes that the devil, having placed Christ upon an exceeding high mountain, could from thence shew him all the kingdoms of the world‡. Now there

latitude in the Gospels (Matt. xxi. 12. ch. xxiv. 1. Mark xi. 11. 15. 17.), so as to include the temple and all the buildings and courts belonging to it ; and the part of the *ἱερον* here specified was the *πτέρυγιον*, or *wing* ; so called, because, like wings, it extended itself in breadth on each side, far beyond the breadth of the temple.

* Acts viii. 39, 40.

† See Dr. Secker, cited above, p. 9, note *.

‡ Some learned persons suppose that the *shewing* here spoken of relates rather to *description* than by ocular sight. Dr. Chandler, p. 215, and Heuman, Diss. Sylloge, tom. i. p. 1. Diss. 7, cited by Dr. Secker, p. 118. But there could be no more occasion to take Christ to an exceeding high mountain, in order to shew him the kingdoms of the world by description, than St. Paul could have had to carry the Corinthians to an exceeding high mountain, in order to shew them a more excellent way, viz. that of charity (1 Cor. xii. 31.). Dr. Mac-knight, being sensible, on the one hand, that a real sight of all the kingdoms of the world from any high mountain whatsoever, is an impossible thing ; and being willing, on the other, to refer this article of the history to what Christ saw with his bodily eyes, would restrain the prospect to the *land of promise*. So this author, and Dr. Chandler likewise (p. 214.) think that the word *κοσμος* is used Rom. iv. 13. *The promise that he should be heir of the WORLD,*
was

there being no mountain upon the face of the earth which commands the view of every part of it (or indeed

was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. Some plead that *κοσμος* signifies the *Roman empire*; and there are many who understand it in this history sometimes of Judea, and at other times of the Roman empire, just as suits their purpose. In answer to which I observe, 1. No one instance has hitherto been produced, in which *κοσμος* signifies only *one particular country*. It may indeed be applied to the *Roman empire*; because this empire was considered and spoken of as comprehending in it all the countries and kingdoms of the world. This application of the word therefore will not answer the purpose for which it is urged. That, in the passage cited above from St. Paul, it cannot be restrained to the land of Judea, is evident from the occasion on which it is used. For the promise referred to by the apostle is that whereby *Abraham was made the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised, and are scattered all over the world*, ver. 11. And it is for this very reason that Abraham is called *the heir of the world*; because believers of all nations of the world, Gentiles as well as Jews, were to have him for their father, and inherit the blessing of justification by faith. To confine the word *κοσμος* here to Canaan, or to any *one country*, is to destroy the whole reasoning of the apostle, which is manifestly designed to shew that Abraham was to inherit a seed out of *all nations*. 2. If some instances could be produced in which the word *κοσμος* was applied to *one particular country*, yet it could not be used in this confined sense in the history of Christ's temptation. For it is not said, the devil shewed Christ *the world*, but *ALL THE KINGDOMS of the world*: a phrase that cannot be limited to the narrow territory of Canaan, which at the time of Christ's temptation was no kingdom at all. Judea was now a province of the Roman empire, an appendage of the province of Syria. See Luke iii. 1. 3. Nay, were we even to admit that the land of promise alone is here referred to, this could not be shewn to Christ from any mountain but by a miracle. *For the*
land

deed of any single kingdom of it), and if there were, no human eye being strong enough to take in the prospect; the shewing Christ all the kingdoms of the world, had it been possible, could have been effected only by a miracle: by a miracle a thousand times greater in its own nature than that performed by God, when, from mount Nebo, he shewed Moses the nar-

land of promise, in its largest signification, reached (as Dr. Mac-knight observes, p. 67.) from the Euphrates to the Mediterranean, east and west, and from Egypt on the south to beyond Sidon northwards; immense tract of country, which no mountain commands, and which no human eye can take in. And yet the doctor adds, All these the DEVIL pointed out to Jesus in the temptation, taking particular notice of their glory, that is, their great and opulent cities, their rich fields, their hills covered with wood and cattle, their rivers, &c. It was JEHOVAH who shewed Moses all the land, or enabled him to take a more distinct prospect of its several quarters than his own unassisted sight would have permitted him to do; Deut. xxxiv. 1. Upon what grounds can we ascribe to the devil this prerogative of the eternal Deity? Lastly, it was absolutely impossible that the devil should shew Christ the land of promise, to its utmost limits on every hand (and still more impossible that he should shew him the whole world), in a moment of time: a circumstance entirely dropt by Dr. Mac-knight in his first edition, and left unexplained in the second. This omission is the more to be lamented, as our ablest commentators, and the christian world in general, have thought themselves under a necessity of receding from the literal sense of the history in this article, very much on account of this circumstance. (See below, p. 34, 35.) With regard to the reason which the doctor assigns for asserting a real sight of the kingdoms of the world, viz. the devil's carrying our Lord up into an exceeding high mountain to view them; it would equally prove that it was really, and not in vision, that St. John was carried away to a great and high mountain, in order to his being shewn the holy Jerusalem. Rev. xxi. 10.

row territory of Canaan*? Besides, the devil shewed Christ not only all the kingdoms of the world, but also all the *glory* of them; that is, the wealth† and treasures of their subjects, and whatever constitutes the splendour and magnificence of their sovereigns, imperial robes, and crowns, and thrones, and palaces, and courts, and guards, and armies: which must all have been produced into view, and exhibited in a manner proper to strike the imagination, and fire the passions. And what still increases the miracle, all these numerous objects,* as well as the whole exterior surface of the globe, the devil must have shewn to Christ at one view, and in a single instant of time‡. Supposing this to be possible, it is one of the greatest miracles

* Deut. xxxiv. 1—3.

† Compare Gen. xxi. 1. ch. xiv. 13. 1 Chron. xxix. 25. 2 Chron. xxxii. 27. Is. lxi. 6.

‡ *ἐν στιγμήν χρόνου*, in an instant, or point of time, Luke iv. 5. The word *στιγμή* is taken from a mathematical point, and is used to denote the most minute and indivisible part of duration, such wherein we can conceive no succession, or which takes up the time of only one idea in the mind. See Erasmus and Casaubon on Luke iv. 5. Vatablus likewise, and Grotius, and Beza, and all the best judges of the Greek language, render the phrase to the same effect, *in puncto temporis*. This rendering is very agreeable to all the antient versions, except the Syriac. Dr. Chandler was too well skilled in the Greek language not to acknowledge (p. 215.) that Christ's *prospect* of all the kingdoms of the world and the glory thereof, whatever it was, was *instantaneous*. Nevertheless, according to his account of it, it was no otherwise instantaneous than all other prospects are: for he says, *it offered itself to his view, as soon as ever he was in the station fixed on for that purpose, and could survey the several objects that were around him*. Nay, according to this learned writer (p. 216.) Christ had no

miracles we can conceive. But it seems very unreasonable to ascribe to the devil the power of performing any miracles; inasmuch as even good angels (who cannot be supposed to have a more limited sphere of action than those accursed spirits, *who are reserved in chains of darkness to the judgment of the great day**,) never perform any miracles at their own pleasure; never appear to men, and remove them from one place to another, as they see fit themselves; nor do they ever gratify them by such marvellous and magnificent prospects as those which it is here supposed were shewn to Christ. Besides, the allowing a miraculous power to the devil destroys the credit and use† of

prospect at all of far the greater part of the kingdoms of the world, but only a description of them; the devil at the same time pointing to the situation of such as were too distant to be seen, and successively informing him what kingdoms lay towards the east, what in the south, what in the west, and, lastly, what towards the north. Thus, by Christ's seeing a very little, as soon as he could survey it; by hearing a great deal about the rest which he did not see; and by being gradually informed in what quarter of the world it lay; by this long series of events would this gentleman account for its being said, that the devil shewed Christ all the kingdoms of the world in an instant.

* 2 Pet. ii. 4. Jud. 6. See Dissert. on Mir. p. 151. 8vo. p. 95. 12mo.

† Miracles are always represented in Scripture as in themselves decisive and absolute demonstrations of the divinity and sole dominion of Jehovah, and as an immediate divine testimony to his messengers. Exod. iv. 5—9. chap. vii. 5. 17. ch. viii. 10. 22. ch. ix. 14. 16. 29. ch. x. 1, 2. ch. xi. 7. ch. xiv. 4. 18. Deut. iv. 34—39. 2 Sam. vii. 22—24. Numb. xvi. 28—30. John v. 36, 37. ch. xi. 41, 42. Acts ii. 10. Matt. xii. 28. John x. 24, 25. 36—38. ch. xiv. 10, 11. Heb. ii. 4.

1 Cor.

of miracles, and contradicts such declarations of Scripture as confine* them to the Deity, either operating immediately by himself, or by the instrumentality of such beings as act by his commission. Indeed, such a power could not consist with the regular course of nature, and the established order of providence, which would suffer from it perpetual interruptions †. And it is abundantly confuted by the experience of nearly six thousand years ; there not being one well attested example of the exercise of it from the beginning of the creation to this day ‡.

IV. It

1 Cor. ii. 4, 5. This view of miracles is utterly inconsistent with the supposition that evil spirits possess the power and liberty of performing them. See Dissert. on Miracles, ch. 3. sect. 5, 6.

* Both prophecies and miracles are absolutely appropriated to God: *He only doeth wondrous works*, Ps. lxxii. 18. Ps. lxxxvi. 10. Exod. xv. 11. *He revealeth secrets, and maketh known what shall come to pass*. Dan. ii. 28, 29. 47. Idolaters are challenged to justify their worship of idols, and the idol gods themselves to give proof of their divinity, by suitable displays of power or knowledge, Is. xli. 21—24. ch. xlii. 8—13. ch. xlv. 7. ch. xlv. 20, 21. ch. xlviii. 3. And if invisible evil agents had (as some have supposed) supported the claims of the heathen deities, this would have been the very same thing in appearance, and with regard to all the mischievous consequences attending it, as if the heathen deities had themselves interposed in support of those claims. Dissert. on Mir. p. 210. 8vo. p. 152. 12mo.

† The Scripture very rationally represents the whole course of nature as universally and invariably fulfilling the will of God, as fixed by his decree which shall not pass away, as governed by his laws which shall not be broken, by laws which he has established for ever and ever : which must therefore be unalterable by any authority, but his who at first ordained them. Ps. cxlviii. 6.

‡ Some perhaps may think this reasoning sufficiently answered by saying,

IV. It is a still greater objection to the common opinion, that it ascribes to the devil the performance of things not only preternatural, but absurd and impossible. Such we must reckon his shewing Christ all the kingdoms of the world from an exceedingly high mountain: for, the earth being of a spheroidal figure, what single mountain can command a view of all the parts of it, of those in particular which are opposite to each other? The sun itself, at its im-

saying, with archbishop Secker (Serm. vol. ii. p. 113.), *the whole life of Christ was so full of wonders, that the history of his temptation is perfectly agreeable to the rest; and we must either question all, or no part.* From the Gospel we learn (not indeed that the whole life of Christ, but) that the period of his public ministry was full of wonders, or of astonishing miracles, which he performed in his Father's name, and in attestation of the divinity of his mission. Many illustrious testimonies were also borne to him by the Father at his baptism, his transfiguration, and his crucifixion. With respect to these wonders, it may be truly affirmed, *we must either question all, or no part*: for they are all supported by the same testimony; and are equally credible in their own nature, being calculated to answer one common end, and referred to one adequate cause. But the history of Christ's temptation, according to His Grace's interpretation of it, is so far from being perfectly agreeable to these wonders, that nothing can be imagined more repugnant. For if the devil can perform *noble miracles*, which is what His Grace (Serm. p. 116, 117.) infers from this history, then miracles are not works appropriate to God, nor decisive testimonies of a divine mission. The doctrine therefore advanced by this eminent writer, is a contradiction to the whole tenor of the Jewish and Christian revelations, and even subversive of the evidence on which they rest. If we do not question, and even reject his doctrine, how can we receive that of the inspired prophets, viz. that God alone doeth wonders; or allow the divinity of their mission?

mense

mense height above the loftiest mountains of our globe, commands and enlightens at once only a single hemisphere. Could the devil then, from one point of view, shew Christ not only the entire circumference of the globe, but also whatever constitutes the glory and grandeur of its kingdoms; and shew him such infinitely numerous objects, in situations so distant, and so opposite, not gradually and successively, but in one and the same instant of time? This does not seem so properly a miracle, as an absurdity and contradiction, such as is not the object of any power.

Now in the interpretation of Scripture, it is a rule allowed by all, and such as ought never to be forgotten, that we are to have recourse to a figurative sense whenever the nature of the thing will not admit a proper and literal one; and that to distinguish what is to be literally, and what figuratively, understood, depends on a previous knowledge of the subject. Thus, when we read of the eyes, ears, hands of God, all allow these to be figures; reason as well as revelation assuring us, that God is a spiritual incorporeal substance. And there is just the same necessity for receding from the literal sense of the passage under consideration, if it implies manifest and palpable contradictions.

It is the more necessary, in the interpretation of the sacred writings, to make the absurdity of the literal construction a reason for adopting a figurative one, as they are allowed by Christians to have God for their author. If it be a just observation, “ that
what

what God says must be true ;” it is no less certain, “ that whatever is false and absurd can never have been spoken by God.” And therefore, if any thing of this kind is asserted by the interpreters of his word, we may be very sure they mistake its meaning.

We are likewise to consider, that it is very common in the sacred writings, on other occasions, to relate things as actually done which yet were only transacted in a vision. And sometimes, perhaps, the Scripture relates visions or representations made to the mind of a prophet as if they were outward transactions, without giving express notice to the contrary* ; any more than they do when they introduce
a me-

* Many learned writers have attempted to shew, that Hosea’s marrying Gomer, and taking to himself children of whoredom, ch. i. and iii;—that Jeremiah’s putting a linen girdle upon his loins, going to Euphrates, and hiding it in the hole of a rock, ch. xiii; his carrying a wine cup from God up and down to all nations, and causing them to drink it, ch. xxv; and his putting yokes upon the necks of several kings, ch. xxvii.—and that Ezekiel’s eating a roll, ch. iii; his taking a tile, pourtraying the city of Jerusalem upon it, and laying siege against it, ch. iv; and his shaving his head and beard with a barber’s raser, ch. v; learned writers have attempted to shew, that these and many other actions ascribed to the antient prophets, were only imaginary and scenical; and that narratives of this kind are to be understood as a history only of prophetic visions, though it be not positively said (as these writers apprehend), that the things related were no where performed but upon the stage of fancy. See Mr. John Smith’s *Select Discourses*, p. 220—229, and Maimonides, *Mor. Nev.* p. ii. c. 46. We may well allow, that all these things, or most of them, were transacted only in vision; not merely because we hereby avoid the inconveniences attending the
literal

a metaphor, a parable, or allegory. Nor need we wonder to find visions related as facts; inasmuch as they pass for such in the mind of the prophet. The representation is so strong and lively, that he cannot distinguish a vision, or scenes discerned only by the mind, from outward objects which are seen with the bodily eye; and is affected by the former in the same manner as he would have been by the latter. St. Paul calls his *being caught up into the third heaven*, and

literal interpretation; but also because the lively representation of these things in vision conveyed the same instruction, and answered every purpose as well as the real performance of them could have done.

I would only add, that perhaps Jacob's wrestling with the angel, the night in which he prayed so earnestly to be delivered from the hands of his brother Esau, and his prevailing in the combat, in token of the efficacy of his prayer with God, and of the consequent victory he was to gain over his brother; this might be done in a prophetic vision, and yet the design of it be sufficiently answered. Jacob's lameness (like Zacharias's loss of speech after his vision in the temple, Luke i. 22.) lasted but for a time, (for he came safe and sound to a city of Shechem, Gen. xxxiii. 18.) and served to convince him of the divine original of this vision; and consequently to reprove his doubts, and to raise and confirm his faith in God. Certainly a spirit has not flesh and bones, so as to be laid hold of by man: nor could Jacob intend to be literally understood, when he says, *he had seen God face to face*, Gen. xxxii. 30. The expression itself imports, that he was favoured with a vision of God, a clear revelation of his will, and the manifest tokens of his peculiar presence. The learned and worthy Bishop of Carlisle, Dr. E. Law, in his *Considerations*, p. 75, 76. (5th edit.) has taken notice of several revelations made in vision, though not distinguished from real facts: which may serve to confirm what is advanced here.

32 *An Inquiry into the Nature and Design of*
*into paradise, a vision and revelation of the Lord**;
 but such were the impressions which it made upon
 him, that he could not determine, with certainty,
 whether this happened by a literal and corporeal
 translation, or only by a mental representation†.
 Besides, in this and the like cases, a lively exhibi-
 tion of certain images before the mind produces the
 same effect with the sight of their corresponding
 objects; and transactions upon the stage of fancy
 answer the same end as a real performance. For these
 reasons, the relation corresponds to the apprehensions
 of the prophet, while the appearances are placed
 before his mind; and though those appearances are

* 2 Cor. xii. 1—4.

† This seems to be his meaning, when, speaking of his being caught
 up to the third heaven, he says, *whether in the body, or whether out
 of the body, I cannot tell.* 2 Cor. xii 2, 3. When an angel presented
 himself to Peter in prison; smote him on the side; caused the chains
 to fall off from his hands; and bade him arise quickly, gird himself,
 bind on his sandals, throw his mantle round him, and follow him
 out (all which he accordingly did); it is said, *that he wist not that it
 was true which was done by the angel; but thought he saw a vision;*
 Acts xii. 7—9. He understood the nature of visions, having been
 favoured with them, ch. x. 10; and yet at first he could not determine,
 whether what now happened to him was a real fact, or a visionary
 representation, and he rather thought it was the latter. It is evident
 from hence, that all these facts might have been transacted only
 upon the mind and imagination of the apostle; that the representa-
 tions of a vision are as clear and lively as objects that lie open to
 the senses; and that it is difficult to distinguish between them by the
 bare impression made at the time, however other circumstances
 might afterwards enable men to do it.—There will be further use
 made of this observation, Sect. IV. No. 2.

ficti-

fictitious, yet neither the credit of the historian nor the use of the relation is impaired.

Nor does it hereby become difficult to distinguish fiction from fact *, while the nature and scope of the relation sufficiently ascertain what it is. If the occurrence be possible and probable, so as to admit, and the manifest intention and other circumstances of it require, a literal construction, it would be very absurd to have recourse to any other. Whereas, on the other hand, if neither the nature of the things themselves which are related do admit, nor the design of them require, a real performance, it would be equally unreasonable not to look out for some figurative interpretation.

If we proceed by these rules in forming our judgment concerning Christ's temptations, we must conclude (unless the objections here urged against them are capable of receiving a just solution), that they are not to be understood as outward transactions; inasmuch as the things themselves were improbable, and even impracticable in their own nature; and inas-

* The observation which follows is designed to vindicate the Scripture, on the supposition that it does not at every turn give express notice, that what it relates as matter of fact is nothing more than the history of a vision. But perhaps the context, or some declaration of the sacred penman, would generally prevent a mistake, no less than the nature of the things related. In some particular cases, as in that of St. Paul mentioned above, it might be a matter of no importance to be determined, even with regard to the prophet himself, whether the objects presented to him were real or imaginary.

much as the real performance could answer no valuable purpose.

V. It is needless to pursue this subject, and to shew, by a long train of consequences, what absurdities follow from the literal construction of this passage; since such as are more obvious carry almost universal conviction, and force even those to depart from the letter who have been most inclined to adhere to it, and best able to defend it. Calvin*, though he does not absolutely determine the matter, was of opinion, that several circumstances in this history agreed best to a vision. And the generality of later writers do readily admit, that the devil's shewing Christ all the kingdoms of the world, and all their glory, in a moment of time, was done by some fictitious scenery†; from a persuasion, as they frankly acknowledge, that it could not be done in any other manner. But if *one* of the temptations were presented to Christ in vision only, why might not the *two others* be presented to him in the same manner? It offers no greater violence to the text to recede from the literal construction in all these instances than in one. Most of the reasons assigned for doing this, in part,

* See his note on Matt. iv. 5.

† Some indeed, and particularly our famous countrymen Hugh Broughton (see Wolfius on Matt. iv. 8.) and Milton, (see *Paradise Regained*, b. iv. l. 40.), suppose that the devil shewed our Saviour all the kingdoms of the world by the help of *optic instruments*: but it is more generally asserted, that he did it either by visionary impressions upon his mind, or by external representations to his sight.

extend equally to the entire narrative. Nay, it is apparently unnatural and arbitrary* not to put the same construction upon the several parts of the same relation; but to understand one part of it according to the letter, and the other in a figurative sense. If therefore there be a necessity, a necessity so evident and cogent as not to be denied by learned and candid adversaries, for departing from the literal interpretation with regard to one of the temptations, the uniformity of the history obliges us to do the same with regard to the rest.

The foregoing considerations would require us to reject the common explication of Christ's temptation, even though it had been related (as we have hitherto supposed, but not admitted) altogether as a plain matter of fact, and we had been left to construe it merely by the nature and intention of the relation. Nevertheless this is far from being the case: for

VI. The text itself (on the letter of which the common hypothesis rests as its sole foundation), instead of positively and expressly asserting that the temptation of Christ was a real outward transaction, contains clear intimations, and even direct assertions, of the very contrary. Thus, when it is said, in the

* This is acknowledged by the candid and judicious Spanheim (*Dubia Evangel. pars iii. dub. 55. p. 247.*), a very able advocate for the literal interpretation, *Causæ etiam nihil est cur interpretum quorundam opinioni subscribamus, qui primam tentationem realiter et historicè contigisse arbitrantur, posteriores duas in visione duntaxat, eadem enim et uniformis narrationis contextura utrobique reperitur.*

fore-cited passage, that the devil shewed Christ all the kingdoms of the world, and all their glory, in one view, or in a single point of time; the expression itself sufficiently intimates, that the evangelist is not speaking of the real sight of all these objects. For, were there any mountain which commanded so extensive a prospect, Christ must have changed his position, and gradually turned himself round in order to take a distinct view of the several parts of it; or, had all the parts in a miraculous manner been placed before his bodily sight, he must have surveyed them in succession, one after another. The evangelist, therefore, must certainly design to be understood of what was instantaneously exhibited to his mind. Other very plain intimations that Christ's temptation is not to be understood as an outward transaction will be produced in the third section. There likewise we shall attempt to shew, that all the evangelists who have mentioned this affair, do, in express terms, affirm that it passed *spiritually* and *in vision*, that it was merely an ideal or mental representation. And if this point should be made good, it will be allowed that the very letter of the text, instead of supporting, confutes the common interpretation. Before we proceed to the consideration of this point, it will be proper to take notice,

SECTION II.

THAT there are some, who, allowing that the whole of this history is to be understood as a recital of visionary representations, contend that these visions were framed by the devil, and that the temptations are to be ascribed to his immediate agency*.

This

* That those who formerly held the temptations of Christ to be a *vision* or *scenical representation*, did not therefore maintain it to be a *divine vision* (whatever some of late have suggested to the contrary), appears by their writings. The question concerning Christ's temptations, which had been agitated before the publication of the 1st edition of this *Inquiry*, was this, *Where they proposed to him outwardly, or in the way of vision?* Those who asserted that all, or any of them were supernatural *visions*, ascribed them to the *devil*, no less than those who believed them to be outward transactions. The learned Spanheim (*Dubia Evang. pars tertia, dub. 55. p. 240, 241.*) states the point in dispute in the following manner: *Queritur enim potest, nec sine causâ, an de historiâ hic agatur, an de visione, et utrum externo congressu adortus fuerit Christus tentator, an potius Christo in visionem et ecstasin rapto species ejusmodi duntaxat objectæ fuerint a tentatore?* He knew of no *third* opinion, for he adds, *Duplex hinc eruditorum sententia.* And in the sequel he argues against the temptations being visions, because it derogated from the dignity of Christ, to allow *that the devil could act upon his mind or imagination, and deceive him by various fictitious representations.* This subject, so far as concerns the removal of Christ from place to place, was afterwards discussed by that prodigy of learning, S. Bochart, who states the controversy in the following terms: *Utrum scilicet Christus seipsâ, an verò inanimatione tantum, a Diabolo in monem, templique pinnaculum, fuerit translatatus,* Oper. vol. i. p. 912. 1ed.

Lugduni

This interpretation, it must be confessed, has one advantage above the former, that it does not destroy the

Lugduni Batav. 1712. And in the following pages he presses his opponents, as Spanheim also had done, with the difficulties of their avowed principle, *that the devil deceived Christ in vision*. Most of our modern writers assert, that it was the devil who made a visionary representation of all the kingdoms of the world to Christ. And very lately Mr. Mason (in a sermon upon Christ's temptations in the wilderness, published in the 2d volume of the *Protestant System*, 1758) undertook to shew, that the whole of what is related in the history was not *real fact*, but passed in a *trance, dream or vision*. He affirms after others, that the phrase, *in the spirit*, here signifies, in a *spiritual manner*, as he thinks it does in John vi. 63. and also in Ezek. xxxvii. 1. where the prophet says, *he was carried out in the spirit*, not really, but in imagination only (*mente non revera*) or in vision (compare Bochart, vol. i. p. 954.). At the same time, like all others who asserted the temptations of Christ to be visions, he did not refer them to God, but maintained that the *devil* painted and exhibited the scenes here described, and strongly presented them, not to the *senses*, but *imagination* of our Lord. See p. 308. 311. 314, 315. 317.

Since the publication of the 1st edition of this *Inquiry*, some have thought, that Le Clerc believed this to be a *divine vision*, merely because he was once inclined to think it a *vision*. And very happy, I acknowledge, would it have been, if (what I esteem) the true opinion concerning Christ's temptations could have boasted so great a patron, whose name could not have failed procuring it a general attention, and doing it much honour. But we have already shewn, that those who believed the temptations of Christ to be visions did never assert their *divinity*, but on the contrary took it for granted, that they were framed by the devil, whose agency the history was thought to assert in the strongest manner, and which the principles of Le Clerc did not at all incline him to call into question: for a vision is only one species of miracles, and he always taught that the devil may perform *true miracles*. See his note on Exod. vii. 11. What Le Clerc controverts is just the same with what others had done

the uniformity of the history, nor represent the evangelists as blending together, indiscriminately, ideal and

done before, Whether what the devil said and did to our Saviour, was said and done to him when *awake* or *asleep*; whether this was an *outward* transaction in the *day time*, or only a *mental* representation in a *dream* or *vision*. When he published his 1st edition of Hammond, he rather inclined to this latter opinion; for he begins his note on Matt. iv. 1, with saying, *What is here related* (i. e. Christ's being led up into the wilderness *to be tempted of the devil*) *may more safely be conceived to have happened to Christ in a vision or dream than really*, or in the outward manner related in the history. In his 2d edition he retracts this opinion, and asserts, *Possunt hæc interdum contigisse, et a vigilante Christo visa, audita et dicta*; adding, *itaque nihil est cur ad somnium confugiamus*. All his doubt was about the manner in which Christ was led and tempted *by the devil*; and he no more denied the devil's agency while he thought this happened to Christ in a dream, than when he afterwards admitted that it might happen to him when awake. The *objections* which he once made to the literal interpretation, and afterwards overcame, farther show this to be the case. His first objection is to the devil's being permitted to *carry our Saviour through the air*. To destroy the force of this objection, Whitby (on Matt. iv. 8.) very pertinently asks, *Looks it not far more odd to give the devil power over the PHANSIE of our Lord to raise such imaginations in him, and suggest such dreams to him, than barely to give him that power over our Lord's BODY, which neither did nor could do him any hurt?* And Le Clerc's second objection also, which is drawn from the *impossibility* of shewing Christ from a mountain all the kingdoms of the world and all their glory in a moment of time, *if he were awake*, though he says it might be done *in a dream*, plainly admits the devil's power to shew Christ the prospect in question, in his sleep: a thing judged by him to be no way impossible. Having solved, to his own satisfaction, these two objections against the literal interpretation, he thought there was no reason for departing from it; as appears from his words cited above. So that he never disputed any thing but the *manner* in which the devil

and real objects. Nevertheless, in all other respects it seems liable to equal, or even to greater difficulties than the former.

Those

devil tempted Christ. And consequently he could not have the least idea of the scenes here described, as being (what it is attempted in the *Inquiry* to shew they are) a *divine revelation and symbolical prediction of the temptations of Christ's future ministry*. Had he believed God to be the *author* of this vision; he would naturally, when he was explaining the *use*, which, he tells us, Christ might make of it, have said somewhat about its *wise and benevolent intention*: whereas he says nothing more on this head, than what all do who ascribe the temptations to the devil, which he might as justly have said, if he believed the devil tempted Christ in a dream. Even when he explains the phrase *ἐν τοῦ πνεύματος*, *of the spirit*, he attempts to shew, just as Mr. Mason and others who ascribe this vision to the devil do, that it imports only *in spirit*, that is, *spiritually, mentally*, or with respect to the mind; (see his *Harmony* on John iii. 5.) and, as he afterwards explains it, in *vision or imagination*, in opposition to an outward transaction. Nay, though here, in confirmation of this meaning of the phrase, he refers to passages which describe divine visions (Ezek. ii. 2. ch. iii. 12. Rev. i. 10. Ezek. xl. 2. Rev. xxi. 10.), he makes no more use of them to prove the vision in question to be divine, than those who believed it to be a diabolical one, who likewise appeal to these passages. And if the phrase does import *no more*, than what both he and they say it does, this alone will not enable us to determine who was the *author* of this vision. Upon Le Clerc's and their principles, this must be determined by other circumstances, either by some additional words, as in Ezek. xl. 2. "the visions of *GOD*," and ch. xxxvii. 1, "the Spirit of the Lord;" or by the connection, which in the case before us was thought, in the most express manner, to refer to the *devil* every thing said and done to our Saviour. And it could be with no other view than to *exclude the agency of God*, and to leave room for *admitting the agency of the devil*, that Le Clerc joins with those who considered this as a diabolical vision, in understanding the phrase

with

Those who will not believe that the devil could convey Christ, really and corporeally, from one place to

with so much latitude, as *possibly* importing only in general, *mentally* or *in vision*; which allowed its application to *any* vision, *whoever* was the author of it, whether a good or evil spirit. The proper proof of the *divinity* of this vision arises from a different interpretation of this phrase, as comprehending in it the idea of a *divine* afflatus and inspiration; which the author of the *Inquiry* has endeavoured to shew it does. This *different* conduct in Le Clerc and him, proves their *views* to be *different*.

For these reasons, I think, the world has not been mistaken in ranking Le Clerc amongst those who believed the agency of Satan in tempting Christ, though he disputed the *manner* in which it happened. Dr. Whitby in particular had no conception that he denied, or that *any one else* could possibly deny, the agency of the devil on this occasion. For in his answer to Le Clerc, after citing the passages which describe the devil as removing Christ from place to place, and afterwards departing from him, he asks, *Must not these words UNAVOIDABLY import, that either the devil did really thus tempt him, or else did frame this vision in his brain?* It is plain that Dr. Whitby, than whom no commentator discovers a more extensive acquaintance with books, had never read of any who allowed these scenes to be *visionary*, and at the same time ascribed them to *God*; and that he would have pronounced such an opinion a most flagrant contradiction to the history, which ascribes all to the *devil*. If Le Clerc had entertained this opinion, he certainly would have attempted at least to remove so *obvious*, and, in Whitby's judgment, so unanswerable a difficulty. His taking no notice of it is a farther proof that his scheme was not liable to it. In a word, those who, since the publication of the 1st edition of this *Inquiry*, represent Le Clerc as asserting the divinity of this vision, not only put a *new* and unheard-of sense upon his words, but such as, to my apprehension, they are not capable of bearing.

N. B. The 1st edition of Le Clerc's *Hammond* was printed in 1698, and the 2d in 1714. In this interval Dr. Whitby published his

to another through the air, do nevertheless admit, that he could raise in Christ a false persuasion that he was thus transported by him. They are cautious indeed how they ascribe to the devil a power of strengthening the bodily sight, that it may reach distant objects; yet readily suppose him capable of placing before the imagination scenes of beauty and grandeur, and of causing it to mistake these shadows for realities. Thus, while they deny the power of Satan over the body, they grant him a nobler empire, a sovereign influence over the mind. Nay, to admit Satan to be the author of visionary representations,

Commentary. Whether Le Clerc's change of sentiments is to be ascribed to Whitby's reasoning, I know not; but it is certain the former does not complain of being misrepresented by the latter. I will only add, that Olearius, in his *Observationes Sacræ ad Evang. Matthæi*, having ranked Le Clerc among those who asserted Christ's temptation to be a vision; Le Clerc in his account of that author (*Bibliothèque Ancienne et Moderne*, tom. ii. p. 349, 350, 351.), declares, that he had never adopted the sentiments of those writers, having only judged it better, *to understand the temptation as a vision, than to allow that the devil carried Christ through the air*; that he had never denied, but on the contrary had maintained (both in his *Pneumatology* and his *Logic*), the power of devils over corporeal substances; but was now of opinion, that the text in the original imported nothing more, than that the devil *led or conducted* Christ. Though Le Clerc had occasion thus accurately to describe and distinguish the different sentiments of divines on this subject, he never drops the least intimation, that either himself or others had ever asserted the *divinity* of this vision. Nor have I been able to discover any traces of this opinion in any writer. Whether Christ's *being tempted by the devil, passed in vision or not, the reality of the agency is the same, on either supposition*, says Bp. Warburton, *Serm.* vol. iii. p. 220.

is to allow him no inconsiderable influence over our corporal as well as mental faculties; if it be true, as many authors assert, that in a vision the senses themselves are bound up, and the exercise of the bodily organs is suspended, at the time that the mind mistakes those images which are placed before it, for real outward objects. Thus this opinion grants a more astonishing extent and grandeur to the empire of Satan than the former.

But does *reason* instruct us, that the gracious Parent and Guardian of mankind would intrust their inveterate enemy with so dangerous a power over them as this; and hereby, in effect, commit them, soul and body, into his hands? Does *experience* teach us, that the devil does in fact exercise such power over the human race? Most certainly it teaches no such doctrine. And if this be a power which the devil never exerts, upon what grounds can we maintain that he possesses it? *Divine revelation* does not run counter either to reason or experience; as it ascribes all miraculous operations in general, so visions* in particular, to God as their author; interposing either immediately by himself, or by his angels, those active ministers or symbolical representations of his peculiar providence. It is needless to enlarge under this head, inasmuch as the argu-

* See Gen. xviii. 1, 2. ch. xxviii. 12—22. ch. xxxi. 11. ch. xxxii. 1, 2. 24—30. Josh. v. 13—15. 1 Kings xix. 11, 12. Acts x. 3. 11—19. ch. xxvii. 23. and the books of Ezekiel, Daniel, and Revelation.

ments urged under the former*, against the supposition of the devil's possessing a miraculous power over the bodies of men, conclude more strongly against his possessing such a power over their minds and bodies too.

I shall only add, that did the devil really possess the power, which, in contradiction to reason, experience and revelation, some are disposed to allow him; how incredible is it that it should ever have been exerted upon the Son of God! Can we believe that this divine person was not only exposed to the suggestions and stratagems of Satan, but overcome by them; that he was possessed and seduced as well as assaulted by the devil, and actually brought under the power of his infernal delusions? The very thought of this strikes the mind with horror! It approaches to blasphemy.

But if the account hereafter to be given of the divine original and benevolent intention of Christ's temptation shall appear to be just, it will afford the strongest confutation of this, as well as of the foregoing, interpretation. It is a deference due to prevailing opinions, not to reject them without assigning the reasons. And without exploding the old, no new hypothesis can hope to be received, or even to be examined. It was expedient, therefore, previously to propose and consider the objections, which may

* Sect. I. No. 3. p. 12—27

be raised against the two * different explications of Christ's temptation, which have hitherto generally prevailed. And the obvious difficulties attending both, will at least serve to justify us, in proceeding to inquire,

* There is indeed a *third* account of Christ's temptation by the devil, which neither admits the personal presence of this evil spirit, nor any representation of him; and supposes Christ's temptation by him to be nothing more than a bare *meditation* of our Lord upon such trials as might possibly be proposed by the great tempter of mankind. But if there were neither a real nor visionary appearance of the devil, and he was not present with Christ in any sense whatever, why does the history affirm that Christ was led into the wilderness *to be tempted by him*? Why does it farther represent the tempter as *coming to Christ; speaking to him; receiving answers from him; conveying or conducting him into the holy city; setting him upon a pinnacle of the temple; taking him to an exceedingly high mountain; from thence shewing him all the kingdoms of the world; and still carrying on a conversation with him, till at length he is commanded by Christ to leave him, and is said to leave him accordingly?* Does this language import nothing more, than that Christ meditated on these things? Does the Scripture on any other occasion relate mere meditations as outward occurrences? Is there any manner of proof that it does so in the case before us? Can any similar phraseology be produced from any good author? The hypothesis we are examining is as destitute of all rational intention as it is of all evidence. For what good end could be answered either by meditating on events that could not be expected to happen, or by relating such meditations as events that had actually happened? In a word, this hypothesis seems to me equally groundless, useless, and unnatural; and serves only to shew how ready persons of reflection were to run to any refuge, rather than acquiesce in either of the foregoing interpretations.

SECTION III.

WHETHER the text itself does not lead us to a very different interpretation, and represent the temptation of Christ as befalling him while he was under a prophetic vision, of which the Spirit of God himself was the immediate and sole author. This, perhaps, is no more than what follows necessarily from what has been already suggested. For, if the temptation of Christ is neither to be understood as an outward transaction, nor diabolical delusion, it must have been a divine vision. And that it was so, may, I apprehend, be fairly argued both from the express letter of the text in the three evangelists, and from several circumstances of the narrative.

St. Matthew, after relating the descent of the Spirit of God upon Jesus at his baptism, adds, *Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness**.

It is generally supposed, that these words assert, “that Jesus now went into the wilderness in person, under a divine guidance.” But with what propriety could it be said, that Jesus went into the wilderness *in person* at this time, when he was there already? It was in the wilderness that John exercised his ministry; and he baptized our Saviour there†. Nor did

* Mat. iv. 1.

† Some eminent writers, I acknowledge, seem to think, that the wilderness was neither the scene of John’s ministry, nor consequently of our Saviour’s baptism. Dr. Clarke in particular, in his Paraphrase

did our Saviour quit the wilderness in the interval between his baptism and his temptation. For it appears

on Luke iii. 2, 3. says, " John having hitherto lived privately in the wilderness, was commanded of God to enter upon his public ministry, and begin to preach to the people. Accordingly, *leaving the wilderness*, he went and preached in all the country about Jordan." Le Clerc translates this passage in the following manner: "La parole de Dieu fut adressée à Jean fils de Zacharie dans le desert. Il *alia ensuite* par tout le pays qui est le long du Jourdain." According to this explication of the language of St. Luke, John had left the wilderness before he baptized Jesus.

In order to form a true judgment concerning the scene of John's ministry, it will be proper to examine the account given of it by all the four evangelists. St. Matthew (ch. iii. 1. 3. 5, 6.) affirms *that he came preaching IN THE WILDERNESS of Judea*. He likewise observes, that Isaiah described him as *the voice of one crying IN THE WILDERNESS*. And then in confirmation of what he had advanced, adds, *Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan, and were baptized of him in Jordan*. Now, if Jordan, that part, at least, of this river in and near which John exercised his ministry, was not in the wilderness, why does the evangelist say in so emphatical a manner, that he came preaching in the wilderness? And why does he represent his baptizing in Jordan as an accomplishment of Isaiah's prophecy, which determined his ministry to the wilderness? The same observation may be made on the language of St. Mark, ch. i. 2, 3, 4, 5. He here takes notice, that *it was written in the prophets, The voice of one crying in the wilderness*. With a manifest view to shew the conformity between this prediction and the baptist's ministry, he subjoins, *John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance. And there went out unto him all the land of Judea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan*. Dr. Clarke himself, in his Paraphrase on these words, says, "A great number of people resorted *into the wilderness* to John, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan." It is indeed self-evident, that he mentions John's baptizing in Jordan as an

illustra-

appears by comparing the several evangelists together* that Christ had but just left the banks of Jordan, and

illustration and proof of what he had before asserted, that he baptized in the wilderness. St. Luke, whose account of this matter we are next to examine, has not given the least hint of John's leaving the wilderness when he began to exercise his ministry. On the contrary, he fixes the scene of it to the wilderness. *The word of the Lord, according to this evangelist, (ch. iii. 2, 3.) came unto John in the wilderness. And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance. As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness.* Now, could St. Luke consider the country about Jordan, where John preached and baptized, as being out of the wilderness, when he tells us that his preaching and baptizing in that country verified the prediction of Isaiah concerning his exercising his ministry in the wilderness? This evangelist well knew that the wilderness was the scene of John's ministry: for he (ch. vii. 24.), as well as St. Matthew (ch. xi. 7.), represents Jesus as saying to the people concerning the baptist, *What went ye out into the wilderness to see?* In the Gospel of St. John we are told, that the forerunner of Jesus baptized in *Bethabara* (ch. i. 28.), a public passage over the river Jordan, on its eastern side; and likewise at Enon, near to Salim, on its western side (ch. iii. 23.). But these places come within the description of the country about Jordan, which, we have seen, lay in the wilderness: a name which the Jews gave to a country that was but thinly inhabited, Joshua xv. 61, 62. (as is observed by Schmidius and Whitby on Matt. iii. 1.) This evangelist (ch. i. 23.) represents the baptist as applying to himself the prophecy of Isaiah (ch. xl. 3.) *I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness.* Now, if the scene of John's ministry, and the place in particular where he baptized, was the wilderness, (as all the four evangelists assert;) then it was here that he baptized Jesus. We are indeed expressly told that *Jesus was baptized of John in Jordan*, Mark i. 9. Compare Mat. iii. 13., Luke iv. 1. And Jordan, we have seen, or that part of this river where John baptized, was in the wilderness.

* Mat. iv. 1. Mark i. 12. Luke iv. 1.

therefore

therefore was still in the wilderness, at the very time that (according to the common hypothesis) he is said to have been led into it. Now, does it not sound very harsh to speak of any one as going, or being led, to a place where he is already?

With a view to solve this difficulty, some have affirmed, "that as Christ was before *below* in the wilderness, upon the banks of Jordan, he might, when he returned from that river, be said, without any impropriety, to be led *up* into the wilderness, that is, to some *higher* part of it." That the banks of Jordan were, in many places, lower than the adjacent wilderness, we are not backward to allow: but that this was the case in that particular place where Jesus had been baptized, is a point that cannot be proved. And even if it could be proved, it would not account for the language of the evangelist: for Jesus had quitted the place where he had been baptized*, and was returning to Galilee, before he was *led up* into the wilderness. The expression therefore, whatever it means, cannot refer to the supposed height of the wilderness in that particular place above the banks of Jordan †.—Others pro-

* *Jesus returned from Jordan, and was led by the spirit into the wilderness*, Luke iv. 1. This language necessarily implies, that Jesus was not upon the banks of Jordan, but was returning to Galilee, before he was led by the Spirit into the wilderness.

† Nor do any of the other evangelists, any more than St. Matthew, refer to the circumstances under consideration, viz. the supposed height of the wilderness above the banks of Jordan. St. Mark says, *Jesus was driven into the wilderness*; St. Luke, *that he was led into the wilderness*.

pose a different solution; affirming, “ that Christ was now led *farther* into the wilderness, and into some more horrid part of it.” It does not however appear that this explication of the word in this place is warranted by the similar use of it in any other place of the New Testament. Nor does it suit with the occasion of its being used here. Jordan, in which Jesus was baptized, was in the heart of the wilderness; and he could not with any propriety be described as being led farther into it when he was at no great distance from that river, which we have seen he was not, when he is said to have been led into the wilderness.—A still different interpretation has been proposed, to the following effect: *Jesus, being baptized of John in the wilderness, returned into Galilee, but was led BACK AGAIN into the wilderness.* But the history, instead of affirming, *that Jesus returned into Galilee*, only says, *He returned from Jordan**, the place of his baptism. And St. Mark †, after relating the divine testimony borne to him there, adds, *And IMMEDIATELY‡* (consequently while he was yet in the wilderness, and not long after he had quitted the banks of Jordan) *the Spirit driveth him into the wilderness.* From hence it follows, that as Christ had not yet left the wilderness, he could not be said to be led *back again* into it. This interpretation therefore must necessarily be rejected. With respect to the two former, they, without accounting for the use of the word in question, admit it as a

* Luke iv. 1.

† Mark i. 11, 12.

‡ Καὶ εὐθὺς.

fact, that Christ was actually in the wilderness at the very time he is said to be led into it. Now, this being allowed, it may very naturally be concluded, that the evangelist cannot be here speaking of Christ's being led, literally and corporeally, into the wilderness; but of his being conducted thither in some different sense and manner.

Having assigned obvious reasons for rejecting the several foregoing explications of the language of St. Matthew, I shall now propose that which appears to me to be its true meaning. His words, literally rendered, are as follow*: *Then was Jesus brought* † (or

* Τότε ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἀνέχθη εἰς τὴν ἐρημὸν ὑπὸ τοῦ πνεύματος: Mat. iv. 1.

† ἀνέχθη, brought. By this word is ἀναγω frequently translated in the New Testament. They brought (ἀνέγαγον) him to Jerusalem, Luke ii. 22. They brought (ἀνέγαγον) him into the upper chamber, Acts ix. 39. Intending to bring him forth (ἀναγαγεῖν) to the people, ch. xii. 4. When he had brought (ἀναγαγὼν) them into his house, ch. xvi. 34. In the same manner the word might have been rendered in the following passages: The devil taking him up (ἀναγαγὰν, bringing him) into a high mountain, Luke iv. 5. They led (ἀνέγαγον, brought) him into their council, ch. xxii. 66. They offered (ἀνέγαγον, brought) sacrifice unto the idol, Acts vii. 41. To bring up Christ again (ἀναγαγεῖν, to bring) from the dead, Rom. x. 7. That brought again (ὁ ἀναγαγὼν, who brought) from the dead, Heb. xiii. 20. — Ἀναγομαι is by grammarians rendered sustollor, tollor; and is very often applied to the launching and sailing of a ship, that is, to its being lifted off from the strand, and borne or carried aloft upon the water. They launched forth, (ἀνέχθησαν) Luke viii. 22. After we had launched, (ὡς δὲ εἴπεντο ἀναχθῆναι ἡμᾶς,) Acts xxi. 1. We set forth, (ἀνέχθημεν,) v. 2. We launched, (ἀνέχθημεν) ch. xxvii. 2. When we had launched from thence (ἀναχθίμεν;) v. 4. This word is translated loosed, ch. xiii. 13. ch. xvi. 11. ch. xvii. 21. It is rendered, sailed, ch. xviii. 21.

(or carried) into a wilderness* by THE SPIRIT.

The Spirit here spoken of can be no other than the Spirit of God, with which he was filled at his baptism†. Now, by the Spirit which Christ received at

ch. xx. 3. 13. And in ch. xxvii. 12. ch. xxviii. 10, 11. *departed*, though here also it might have been, with equal propriety, rendered, *launched* or *sailed*. The same use of the word is common in Heathen writers.

* Though ἡ ἐρημος, when applied to one particular wilderness, as that of Judea or Arabia, for example, is properly rendered, “the wilderness,” (Mat. iii. 1. John iii. 14.) yet Schimidius (on Mat. iii. 1.) very justly observes, Interdum etiam *indefinitè* notatur talis locus quicunque, ut Mat. iv. 1. ch. xxiv. 26. Mar. i. 12, 13. Luc. iv. 1. ch. viii. 29. ch. xv. 4. Act. xxi. 38. Apoc. xii. 6. 14. ch. xvii. 3. Et licet articulus aliquando additus inveniatur: non tamen certum individuum loci tùm denotat, aut certam eremum: sed quaecunque sanè, cujuscunque tractus eremum, non tam ab aliis eremis, quàm ab aliis illius tractus locis distinctam; ubi nec nomen eremorum est additum, nec exquirere illud operæ admodum est pretium. Sufficit nos scire, eremum ibi quandam, non alterius speciei locum denotari. Similis est ratio Matth. xvii. 15. Πολλακις πιπτει εἰς τὸ πῦρ, καὶ πολλακις εἰς τὸ ὕδωρ. Non quòd notetur certus numero ignis, aut certa numero aqua. Sed *indefinitè*, quicunque ignis, et quaecunque aqua. Ideo Marcus ix. 22. sine articulo effert, καὶ εἰς πῦρ ἐβαλε, καὶ εἰς ὕδατα. In the passage before us therefore, ἡ ἐρημος should be rendered “a wilderness,” or a wild and desert place, inhabited rather by wild beasts than men.

† This appears from the manner in which the evangelists connect the account of Christ’s temptation with that of his baptism; and from the distinction they make between the Spirit by which he was conveyed into the wilderness, and the tempter. The former is expressly called by St. Luke the Holy Spirit, ch. iv. 1. *Jesus, being full of the Holy Spirit, returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit* (that is, the Holy Spirit before mentioned) *into a wilderness*. Accordingly, the Syriac version of ὑπο τοῦ πνεύματος is rendered a Spiritu sanctitatis; and the Persic a Spiritu sancto. With respect to this

at his baptism, we are to understand, as all allow, *the extraordinary gifts and powers* bestowed upon the great prophet of the Christian Church, to furnish him for the execution of that office with which he was at this time invested. In this sense our Saviour uses the word, when he applies to himself that prophecy of Isaiah, *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor**. And again, when he says, *If I cast out demons by the Spirit of God†*. In the same sense the word is used by John the Baptist, when he said, concerning Christ, *God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him‡*; and also when he delivered the following prophecy concerning him, which received its accomplishment on the day of Pentecost, *He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit, and with fire§*. When the apostle John says, *The Holy Spirit was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified||*, he plainly refers to that most plentiful donation of miraculous gifts, which was wisely reserved till Christ's ascension into heaven, when it was most wanted to attest and propagate the Gospel. It was with an express reference to those extraordinary en-

this phrase, Beza on Mat. iv. 1. observes, Si libeat αναφοραν articuli servare, vertere licebit, *ab eo Spiritu*; ut de eodem illo Spiritu hic agi constet cujus paulò ante mentio facta fuerat. i. e. de Spiritu sancto.

* Luke iv. 18. † Mat. xii. 28. Compare ch. i. 18. Luke xi. 20.

‡ John iii. 34. § Mat. iii. 11. Compare Acts i. 5. ch. ii. 3.

|| John vii. 33.

dowments which the apostles were encouraged to expect, that Christ said to them after his resurrection, *Receive ye the Holy Spirit**. *Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me†*. Many other passages might be added; but it is unnecessary to cite them at large‡.

And as *the Spirit* frequently denotes miraculous gifts in general; so it often expresses a prophetic illumination in particular, a divine agency on the mind revealing new truths to it, or making some discovery of the will of God. *It was revealed unto him by the Holy Spirit §*, by the agency or illumination of the divine Spirit. *Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit ||*, by a divine afflatus and inspiration. *Being sent forth by the Holy Spirit ¶*: *were forbidden of the Holy Spirit ***; in both these places the Holy Spirit denotes a prophetic revelation ††.

This phrase is applied to revelations in the way of vision, or sight; as will be shewn at large below, when we come to examine the meaning of the cor-

* John xx. 22.

† Acts i. 4, 5. 8.

‡ Acts ii. 1—4. 14—18. 33. 38. ch. iv. 8. 21. ch. vi. 3. ch. viii. 15. 17, 18. ch. x. 44, 45. 47. Heb. ii. 4. 1 Pet. i. 12. See also Numb xi. 29.

§ Luke ii. 26. ὑπο τοῦ πνεύματος τοῦ ἁγίου.

|| 2 Peter i. 21. ὑπο πνεύματος ἁγίου.

¶ Acts xiii. 4. ὑπο τοῦ πνεύματος τοῦ ἁγίου.

** Acts xvi. 6. ὑπο τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος.

†† See also Acts viii. 29. ch. x. 19. in which places *the spirit* denotes an afflatus or revelation of the Spirit.

respondent phrase in St. Luke*, and some similar expressions in the prophet Ezekiel; where being taken up by the Spirit†, denotes a prophetic scenery and representation. Now, if Christ was brought into a wilderness, by the Spirit, in the sense of the phrase here explained, that is, by a prophetic illumination, by revelation, in a vision; St. Matthew cannot be understood of his being conveyed there *corporeally* and personally, but *spiritually* and *mentally*. To this sense of the phrase, the connexion necessarily leads; and this the circumstances of the history evidently require. For, this alone removes the objection against the literal construction, just now taken notice of. Though it could not with any propriety be said, that Christ was at this time carried into the wilderness in a corporeal manner, in which sense he was there already; yet there is nothing improper in saying, he was now conveyed into a wilderness in a spiritual manner, in vision or mental representation, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit of God.

To some it seems strange that Christ should be brought into the wilderness by the Spirit, or by visionary representation, if he was there before in person; or that he should be in the same place, at the same time, both really and in vision." This objection is entirely obviated by the translation given above of the words of St. Matthew, who says, "Jesus was

* The *ἐν τῷ πνεύματι* of St. Matthew is equivalent to the *ἐν τῷ πνεύματι* of St. Luke; and therefore if this latter be (as we shall shew it is) expressive of a divine vision, the former must be so too.

† Ezek. iii. 12.

brought (not into *the* wilderness, but) into *a* wilderness by the 'Spirit,' without referring to any one particular wilderness. The place therefore where Christ really and personally was, has no relation to that which was the scene of his vision. But if you choose to adhere to the common translation of the original word, and affirm that it means *the wilderness*, you will not prejudice the interpretation here given of the phrase, *by the Spirit* *; but only make it so much the more necessary to understand it as expressive of a vision or spiritual rapture; it being impossible, for the reason just now assigned, to interpret it in another sense.

The sense here affixed to the language of St. Matthew, may be justified by the use of the same or similar phrases in other passages of Scripture. The prophet Ezekiel was carried away to Babylon, with many other of his countrymen, in Jehoiachin's captivity; and the prophetic spirit came upon him, when he was amongst his fellow-exiles by the river Chebar,

* For a prophet may be brought by the Spirit into the very same place where he was before in person; that is, the scene both of his vision and of his personal presence may be the same. Of this we have an example in the case of Ezekiel, ch. iii. 11. 15. ch. xi. 24, 25., which will be cited below. We might therefore without the least prejudice to our argument grant, that the place where Christ was in person, where he continued forty days, and from whence he returned into Galilee, was the external archetype of the chief scenes of Christ's prophetic vision. But there is no necessity, nor indeed any sort of reason, to make this concession; because the evangelist is not speaking of any one wilderness in particular.

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in Mesopotamia. Here, as he informs us, he received revelations from God by visions: *The heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God. The word of the Lord came unto me; and the hand of the Lord was there upon me**. After this general declaration, he goes on to describe the cherubims and other scenes of his vision, in the same manner as if they had been objects of his bodily sight.—*I looked, and behold, a great whirlwind came out of the north, a great cloud, &c. When I saw it (the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord) I fell upon my face†. And the spirit entered into me, when he spake unto me, and set me upon my feet, that I heard him that spake unto me‡. When he received new visions and revelations from God, such as were particularly designed for the admonition of his fellow-exiles; this new prophetic scene is described in words which literally import a local translation, which there is not the least reason to suppose; for the prophet, at the time he is represented as conveyed to those of the captivity, was already amongst them in person: *Go, get thee to them of the captivity.—Then the spirit took me up, and I heard behind me a voice of a great rushing.—So the spirit lifted me up, and took me away, and I went in bitterness, in the heat of my**

* Ezek. i. 3. compared with 2 King. iii. 15.

† Ezek. i. 4. 28.

‡ Ezek. ii. 2. which is thus rendered by the 70, *καὶ ἦλθεν ἰπ' ἐμὲ πνεῦμα, καὶ ἀνέλαβέν με, καὶ ἔξηρε με, καὶ ἕστησε με ἐπὶ τοὺς πόδας σου, κ.τ.λ.*

spirit, but the hand of the Lord was strong upon me*. In the sequel of these prophecies we find Ezekiel carried to Jerusalem, there shewn the idolatries committed by the Jews within the precincts of the temple, and employed in digging in the walls of it, as if he had been actually in that place; notwithstanding these several occurrences, however related as corporeal actions and motions, were undoubtedly transacted in vision only, for he was now at Babylon. *The hand of the Lord fell upon me, the Spirit lift me up between the earth and the heaven, and brought me in the visions of God to Jerusalem, to the door of the inner gate that looketh towards the North, &c.*† When a new scene at Jerusalem was placed before his imagination, it is said, *The spirit lift him up, and brought him to the place it was designed to represent*‡. After this he is described as carried back again into Chaldea, from which place he had not, during these successive scenes, been absent in person: *The Spirit took me up, and brought me in vision by the Spirit of God into Chaldea, to them of the captivity; so the vision which I had seen went up from me. Then I spake unto them of the captivity, all the things that the Lord had shewed me*§. Upon another occasion he tells us, *The hand of the Lord was upon me, and carried me out in (or by) the Spirit of the Lord, and set me down in the midst of the valley which was*

* Ezek. iii. 11, 12. 14.

† Ezek. xi. 1.

‡ Ezek. viii. 1—10.

§ Ezek. xi. 24, 25.

full of bones; though what follows is nothing more than the narrative of a vision*. And we find him once more carried to Jerusalem, without stirring from Chaldea: *The hand of the Lord was upon me, and brought me thither. In the visions of God brought he me into the land of Israel, and set me upon a very high mountain†.* From these several passages it appears, that to be brought or carried from one place to another, *in the visions of God‡*, or (which is a phrase of the like import) *in or by the Spirit§*, does not denote any real local removal, but the being transported from one place to another, by way of mental lively representation, under the power of a divine trance or ecstasy; and that in this sense a per-

* Ezek. xxxvii. 1.

† Ezek. xl. 1, 2.

‡ Notwithstanding the positive declaration of the prophet, that in the forecited passages he is only reciting visionary representations, and the obvious absurdities attending the contrary supposition, yet have many contended for a local translation of Ezekiel, either in the body or out of it, from Chaldea to Jerusalem, and for the reality of the scenes and transactions which he describes. But the authors of the *Universal History*, vol. iv. p. 196—198, (8vo. ed. 1747.) have shewn that the temple described by Ezekiel had no proportion, as to its measures, with that of Solomon; and that it was a prophetic or emblematical one, which never existed but in this prophecy. What end then could be answered by the prophet's being really translated to Jerusalem either in his body or out of it? The scenes were all painted upon his imagination.

§ That these phrases, *in the visions of God*, and *in or by the Spirit*, are equivalent, will appear by comparing the several passages from Ezekiel cited above. As to the phrase, *the hand of the Lord*, it expresses only a divine agency in general, not the mode of it. Compare 1 Kings xviii. 46. 2 Kings iii. 15.

son may be said to be carried to the very place, where he already was personally and corporeally, if it becomes the scene of his prophetic vision; or to be returned to that place, though he had never quitted it in the ordinary sense of that expression, if it becomes the scene of new visionary representations, which, as we observed before, are related as facts, because they appear as such to the prophet. We cannot therefore be at a loss to understand what St. Matthew means*, when he tells us, that *Jesus was led up or brought into a wilderness by the Spirit*. Into a wilderness

* It has been asserted, that the language of Ezekiel is a direct description of visions, which that of the evangelists is not. But whoever will compare the Septuagint version of the passages cited from the prophet Ezekiel, with the language of the evangelists, will find a remarkable correspondence between them, such as may farther serve to justify our explaining the latter by the former. Thus Ezekiel's saying, *πνεῦμα ἤγαγε με*, ch. viii. 3. ch. xi. 1. corresponds to *ἀνῆχεν ἰσοῦ τοῦ πνεύματος*, in St. Matthew. And the *ἐν πνεύματι* in Ezekiel, ch. xxxvii. 1. as it expresses the same thing with St. Matthew's *ὑπο τοῦ πνεύματος*, so it answers to St. Luke's *ἐν τῷ πνεύματι*, cited below, p. 64, note †. There is no material difference between the *ἀνέλαβε* of Ezekiel, ch. iii. 12. ch. ii. 2. ch. viii. 3. ch. xi. 1. and the *παράλαμβαναι* of St. Matthew, ch. iv. 5. 8. The words, *αἰαγόρων* and *ἤγαγεν*, used by St. Luke, ch. iv. 5. 9. in the passages parallel to the last cited ones from St. Matthew, correspond to *ἤγαγε*, *εἰσηγαγε* and *εἰξηγαγε* in Ezekiel, ch. viii. 3. 14. ch. xi. 1. ch. xxxvii. 1. ch. xl. 3. Now if the language of the evangelists be the same with that of the prophet, it certainly calls for a like construction with that, especially as the style of the New Testament is allowed to correspond to the Greek version of the Old. And consequently the language of the one is no less expressive than that of the other, both of a *prophetic impulse and inspiration of the Spirit*, and of the *particular mode* of that inspiration, which was by *vision*, as distinct from every other species of revelation.

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he seemed to himself to be carried, thither he was transported in vision by a prophetic divine afflatus.

The expressions used by the evangelists Mark and Luke, confirm the explication here given of the language of St. Matthew. Mark says*, *Immediately* (after the descent of the Spirit at his baptism) *the Spirit* (or according to Beza's antient manuscript, *the Holy Spirit*) *driveth him* (or *casteth him out*†) *into a wilderness*. These words are very improperly referred to Christ's being driven by the Spirit into the wilderness, corporeally and personally; because we have shewn that he was personally there before this impulse of the Spirit. They clearly express a supernatural and divine agency upon the mind of Christ; and therefore naturally and necessarily convey to us the idea of a prophetic rapture, trance, or ecstasy, during which he thought himself transported into a dreary wilderness. The language of St. Mark perfectly corresponds with that of St. Matthew; there being no difference between saying with the former, *Jesus was driven* or *cast out* by the Spirit, and saying with the latter,

* Chap. i. 12.

† The original word, *εκβαλλει*, is applied very frequently to describe Christ's expulsion of demons. Vid. Mat. viii. 16. 31. ch. ix. 33, 34. ch. x. 1. 8. Mark i. 34. 39. ch. iii. 15. Luke xi. 14. ch. xiii. 32. The word, however, does not always express force and violence, nor is it necessary that it should do so, in order to justify the application here made of it. For in describing Ezekiel's vision, ch. viii. 3. ch. xi. 1. ch. xxxvii. 1. the Septuagint says, the Spirit *ηγαγε* led him, or *εξηγαγε* led him out, which last expression comes very near that of the evangelists, according to the sense in which *εκβαλλει* is used John x. 4.

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that he was *brought* or *carried* by the Spirit, the meaning of which has been already explained. By comparing together the several passages of Ezekiel cited above, it appears, that when he says, *the Spirit brought* or *carried him*, he means the same as when he says, he was *brought* or *carried in the Spirit*; a phrase unquestionably descriptive of a prophetic vision.

To this explication of the language of St. Mark, it may be objected, “ that if by the *Spirit’s driving Jesus into a wilderness*, he means, that the Spirit drove him there mentally and in vision, that is, into an *ideal* wilderness; it will be difficult to reconcile this with what follows in the next verse, which seems to refer to a *literal* one, *And he was there in the (or that) wilderness forty days tempted of Satan, and was with the wild beasts.*” It is, without doubt, of *one* and the *same* wilderness that St. Mark speaks in both these verses. And were we to grant that this wilderness was a *real* one, and that Mark and the other evangelists speak of Christ’s being led or driven into it personally and corporeally, it may nevertheless be true, that his temptation was a mere vision; if these phrases, *the Spirit, in* and *by the Spirit*, import in this history, as they certainly do elsewhere, a *miraculous impulse and illumination of the Spirit, discovering new truths to a prophet, revealing future events, and exhibiting scenes and appearances before his imagination.* On this supposition, the meaning of the evangelists will be, “ Christ was brought into a wilderness (not merely under a divine direction, the phrases

phrases import much more than this, but) under the full influence of the prophetic Spirit, making suitable revelations to his mind, and giving him a view particularly of his future trials*." But St. Mark is to be understood as speaking only of an ideal wilderness, that wilderness into which Jesus was driven by the Spirit, or which was the scene of his prophetic vision. This is what is spoken of in the twelfth verse; and most probably therefore in the thirteenth. The evangelist may very naturally be explained in the following manner: "No sooner did the Spirit descend upon Jesus at his baptism, than by his inspiration he was carried into a frightful desert in a prophetic trance or vision. In this situation, and in this state, he remained for forty days, during all which space he was, according to his own apprehension, assaulted by the temptations of Satan, and exposed to danger from the fury of wild beasts†." This interpretation seems to agree best not only with the language of St. Matthew, but with that of St. Luke also, which we now proceed to examine.

* These trials, it will be shewn below, are described as *temptations of the devil*, on account of the particular *mode* of their being revealed, being couched under the figure of Satan coming to him, and urging temptations.

† The circumstance of his being with the wild beasts, rather confirms than destroys the opinion of his being in the wilderness in a state of trance, which deprived him of all power of self-defence, and which made it as absolutely necessary that he should, during the continuance of that state, which lasted forty days, be miraculously protected from wild beasts, as that he should be miraculously supported without food.

This

This evangelist says, that *Jesus being full of the Holy Spirit* (as St. Stephen* also is said to be, when he had a divine vision), *was led* (brought or carried) *into a wilderness by* (or *in*) *the Spirit*†, that is, by that prophetic Spirit with whose gifts he was filled at his baptism, and *in the power of which he returned into Galilee*‡, that he might preach the Gospel, and confirm it by miracles. There being here a manifest reference to the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit, the words *in* or *by the Spirit*, like those of St. Matthew cited above, must be designed to express his miraculous agency, or a *prophetic afflatus and illumination*; which is a sense they often bear in other passages of Scripture. David, we are told, *in Spirit*§, or *by the Holy Spirit*||, called the Messiah his Lord; that is, he did this by a prophetic impulse of the Spirit. *To speak mysteries in the Spirit*¶; *to pray with the Spirit*; *to sing with the Spirit*** , is to speak, pray and sing in the exercise of a spiritual gift, or under a miraculous illumination and influence of the Spirit. In this sense the phrase is used, when it is said of Simeon, that he came into the temple *by the*

* Acts vii. 55. *He, being full of the Holy Ghost* (i. e. under its miraculous energy and illumination), *looked up stedfastly into heaven, &c.*

† *ἠγέτο ἐν τῷ πνεύματι*, he was carried in or by the Spirit, Luke iv. 1. This answers to *ἀνχῶν ὑπὸ τοῦ πνεύματος*, in St. Matthew. Every argument, therefore, urged above to establish the sense of the latter, is also applicable to the former.

‡ Luke iv. 14.

§ *Ἐν πνεύματι*, Mat. xxii. 43.

|| *Ἐν τῷ πνεύματι τῷ ἁγίῳ*, Mark xii. 36.

¶ 1 Cor. xiv. 2.

** Ver. 15.

Spirit.

*Spirit**. He came there under the powerful inspiration of the prophetic Spirit, of which he gave proofs by the testimony he bore to Jesus, and the predictions he delivered concerning him. The meaning therefore cannot be, that he came to the temple only by *a divine direction*†. To mention one instance more; St. Paul went to Jerusalem *bound in the Spirit*‡, that is, assured by the Spirit of prophecy, or by the predictions of inspired men, that the Jews would bind him there. For it is added§, *The Holy Spirit* (by the mouth of divinely inspired prophets) *witnesseth in every city, saying, that bonds and afflictions abide me*||. So familiar was this language with the Jews as expressive of inspiration, that a person thought to be inspired by a demon, was described as one *in an unclean Spirit*¶. Now if St. Luke only asserts, that Christ was carried into a wilderness by a supernatural illumination of the understanding, or the inspiration of the spirit of prophecy; you can never infer from hence that he was carried thither in person**.

As

* ΕΝ ΤΩ ΠΝΕΥΜΑΤΙ, Luke ii. 27. † ΤΩ ΠΝΕΥΜΑΤΙ, Acts xi. 22.

† See Luke ii. 25. § Acts xx. 23.

|| Compare Acts xxi. 4, where we are told, that some said to Paul *through the Spirit* (διὰ τοῦ πνεύματος), that is, by the inspiration of the Spirit of prophecy, *that he should not go up to Jerusalem, if he tendered his own liberty. For the Holy Spirit said, (by Agabus the prophet) The Jews at Jerusalem will bind him*, ver. 11.

¶ ΕΝ ΠΝΕΥΜΑΤΙ ΑΚΑΘΑΡΤΩ, Mark v. 2. Essay on Demoniacs, p. 100.

** Of Simeon it is said, *he came* (which expresses his own personal agency in coming) *into the temple by the Spirit*. But of Christ it is not said, *he came or went* into a wilderness, but that he was *brought*

As the phrase, *in the Spirit*, is expressive of a prophetic afflatus and illumination in general, so it is applied particularly to revelations received in the way of vision, or emblematic representations of things supernaturally impressed upon the prophet's imagination. An eminent critic* has observed, "that those two different manners of expression, which we now usually call *literal* and *figurative*, were in the Jewish language frequently denoted by the words *flesh* and *spirit*. *The flesh*, says our Saviour, *profiteth nothing; the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life*†. His meaning is, he intended not to be understood *literally*, but *figuratively*. To be therefore, or do any thing *in spirit*, signifies *being* or *doing* that thing *figuratively*, in the *spiritual* or *moral*, in the *religious* or in the *abstract* sense, in opposition to the *gross* and more *literal* meaning, in which the same words may at *other* times be understood." This observation is applicable to many passages of Scripture‡, and serves to shew in general, that the same phrase may have different senses, according to the nature of the subject to which it is joined; nor is it foreign from our present purpose. It does not, how-

brought or carried thither in or by the Spirit, which merely expresses a divine agency upon his mind. *As many as are led (αγγραι, acted) by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God*, Rom. viii. 14.

* Dr. Clarke, Sermon. 46. vol. i. p. 286. fol. ed.

† John vi. 63.

‡ It is very justly applied by Dr. Clarke to John iv. 23. Rom. ii. 28. Phil. iii. 3. compared with Acts vii. 51. Perhaps the other passages cited by this learned writer require a different interpretation.

ever,

ever, convey the precise and full meaning of the passages that follow, where *being* in the Spirit, signifies being under the full influence of the prophetic Spirit, making revelations in the way of vision; and *doing* any thing in the Spirit denotes that thing's being done, not merely *spiritually* (in opposition to the more gross and literal meaning), but in prophetic scenery and representation. When St. John tells us, *I was in the Spirit**, he means what the ancient prophets do by this phrase, that he received a revelation from God in the way of a *vision*†; as clearly appears from the account he gives us of what he *heard* and *saw* while the spirit of prophecy was upon him‡. When he repeats the same phrase§, he still uses it in the same sense. This every one must allow who surveys the context. *A voice said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter. And immediately I was in the Spirit: and behold, a throne was set in heaven.* From a regard, I presume, to this connection, a learned and judicious expositor|| says, “ This phrase, *I was in the Spirit*, signifies to

* Rev. i. 10.

† *Fuit in Spiritu*, i. e. *in ekstasi*, faciente Spiritu sancto, ut cessante ad tempus sensuum externorum usu defixus hæserit in contemplatione illarum rerum, quarum imagines ipsius Dei manu per ductus subtilissimarum sanguinis partium in cerebro describebantur, et secundum leges naturæ ad mentem referebantur: quod revelationis genus, si vigilantibus obtingat, Scripturæ stylo *visio* dici solet. Vitrings in loc.

‡ Compare Rev. i. 10, with Ezek. iii. 12.

§ Ch. iv. 2.

|| Doddridge in loc.

be under a strong and supernatural operation of the Spirit of God, acting on the imagination in such a manner as to open extraordinary scenes, which had not any external archetype*.” Sometimes, however, in a prophetic vision, the scenes presented to the prophet’s view were real, and he saw what was transacted at a distance. St. Paul tells the Corinthians†, *I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit*. In the very same strain he addresses the Colossians‡, *Though I be absent in the flesh, yet I am with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order*. In both these places the apostle is supposed by many interpreters§ to refer to an extraordinary revelation of the Spirit, giving him a particular view of the circumstances of the churches of Corinth and Colosse, such as was equivalent to the actual sight of them : just as Elisha was enabled by a divine impulse to discern what his servant had done, when he ran after Naaman the Syrian ||, and as Ezekiel saw in Babylon what was done in Jerusalem ¶. Whether the visionary representation had an external archetype or not, the prophet is spoken of as being transported to the place where the scene of his vision was. St. John tells us, in language as apposite as possible to our present purpose, *that an angel carried him away in the Spirit*

* In the Assembly’s Annotations the sense is thus expressed, “ He was spiritually carried up into heaven in a vision.”

† 1 Cor. v. 3.

‡ Ch. ii. 5.

§ See Dr. Doddridge and others on these places.

|| 2 Kings v. 26.

¶ Ezekiel, ch. viii. and xl.

into the wilderness*. New scenes were afterwards presented to his view, which he thus describes, *He carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem*†. St. John was not carried (as Dr. Clarke‡ observes) into the wilderness (and we may add, nor to a high mountain) *really and literally*, but only in a *visionary* representation. Nor indeed are there any who understand the apostle as speaking here of any other than a spiritual rapture. During the age of inspiration, the same language was not uncommon, and it was used in the sense here explained, as appears from the writings of Hermas, the same, as is commonly supposed, that was contemporary with the apostles§. We may add, that the passages from Ezekiel cited above to illustrate the language of St. Matthew, are equally applicable to that of St. Luke||. In a word, if we will explain the three evangelists on

* Rev. xvii. 3.

† Ch. xxi. 10.

‡ Dr. Clarke, vol. i. p. 286.

§ Hermas, in his first vision, says, *Et dum ambulassem, obdormivi. Et Spiritus me rapuit et tulit me per quendam locum ad dexteram, per quem non potuit homo iter facere. Erat autem locus ille in rupibus.—Cumque transirem locum illum, veni ad planiciem. In his second vision he expresses himself as follows: Rursumque me abstulit Spiritus, et duxit me in eundem locum, quo anno primo.—Et video contra me anum illam, quam et anno superiore videram, ambulantem. Cotelarii Patres Apostol. ed. Clerici, vol. i. p. 75. 77. Dr. Harwood's New Introduction, vol. i. p. 173.*

|| See above, p. 56, &c. That passage in particular, Ezek. xxxvii. 1, according to the Septuagint, answers exactly to the language of Luke, *He led me out by πνευματι, in the Spirit.*

the subject under consideration, by the phraseology of the Old Testament or of the New, then we must allow, that when they affirm that Jesus was brought, driven, or carried into a wilderness by or in the Spirit, they must mean that he was conveyed there (not personally and corporeally, but) by the afflatus or inspiration of the Spirit of God, in a prophetic vision, trance, or ecstasy*.

* It may not be improper to observe, that the Scripture sometimes distinguishes between a vision, and a trance or ecstasy. When St. Peter saw heaven opened, and a sheet full of beasts and fowls, we are told, that he fell into a trance, or, as it is in the original, an ecstasy, *ἐπεπεσεν ἐπ' αὐτὸν ἐκστασις*, Acts x. 10, 11, 12. The objects which the apostle saw during his trance, are called a vision. While Peter doubted in himself, what this vision (*τὸ ὄραμα*) which he had seen should mean, ch. x. 17. While Peter thought on the vision, *περὶ τοῦ ὁραματός*, v. 19. He thought he saw a vision, or scenes divinely represented to his mind, ch. xii. 9. In a trance (*ἐν ἐκστασι*) I saw a vision (*ὄραμα*) ch. xi. 5. St. Paul says, ch. xxii. 17, 18, I was in a trance (*ἐν ἐκστασει*, in an ecstasy), and saw the Lord saying unto me. His rapture into paradise, and what he heard there, he calls a vision and revelation of the Lord, 2 Cor. xii. 1. When the Scripture distinguishes vision from ecstasy or trance, it means by the former the scenes and objects placed before the mind by God, or the symbolical revelation; and by the latter, the prophetic impulse, or rather that preternatural state of mind produced by it, during which it perceives only those objects and scenes which are presented to it by a divine hand, and without the instrumentality of the bodily organs. Being in the spirit (Rev. i. 10.) includes both an ecstasy and a symbolical revelation, or the objects seen. Vision likewise seems to be used in the same comprehensive sense. Saul has seen in a vision (*ἐν ὁραματι*) a man named Ananias), Act. ix. 12. Cornelius saw in a vision (*ἐν ὁραματι*) evidently, an angel of God coming in to him, ch. x. 3. These two things, vision and ecstasy, mutually imply each other, and therefore may sometimes be used as synonymous.

Let us now proceed to examine the nature of this vision, or the several scenes that composed it. St. Matthew affirms, that the intention of Christ's being carried into a wilderness in a prophetic trance or vision was, *that he might be tempted by the devil**. St. Luke says the same† : *Jesus, being full of the Holy Spirit, was led or carried in or by the Spirit into a wilderness, being (or that he might be‡) forty days tempted of the devil.* St. Mark expresses himself in the following terms§ : *The spirit driveth him into a wilderness. And he was there in that wilderness (that is, in the wilderness into which the Spirit drove him, and which was the scene of his prophetic vision) forty days tempted of Satan.* Now if the proper end and design of Christ's prophetic vision was, as both St. Matthew and St. Luke assert, *that he might be tempted by the devil*, then his temptation by the devil was a visionary representation, the operation and effect of that prophetic afflatus he was now under. His temptation could not have been spoken of as the intention of his vision, if it had not itself been such. Besides, if his temptation was the design of his vision, the former must have befallen him during the continuance of the latter ; or, in other words, he was tempted by the devil while he was under the miracu-

* Ch. iv. 1.

† Ch. iv. 1, 2.

‡ Compare Rev. xx. 2. where *ligavit eum*, is thought by some to denote *ut esset ligatus*.

§ Ch. i. 12, 13.

lous illumination of the Spirit of God, making new revelations to him, and exhibiting extraordinary scenes before him. This is expressly asserted by St. Mark, and clearly and necessarily implied in the language of St. Matthew and St. Luke. From hence it follows, that his temptation by the devil; all the parts of it, as well the several proposals which the devil made to Christ, as the different scenes and objects he presented to him, and his carrying him to the summit of the Jewish temple, and from thence to a high mountain*; all the parts of this transaction were merely ideal

* With regard to the taking Christ from the wilderness to the Jewish temple, and from thence to a distant mountain, there is some peculiar evidence that this is not to be understood of a real and corporeal translation of Christ from the wilderness to these different places, but of such as was spiritual and mental only. For it appears from the history, that Christ was in the wilderness bordering on Jordan when the temptation ended, as well as when it began, pursuing his journey into Galilee (*a*). If he really left the wilderness, and travelled first to Jerusalem, and from thence to a high mountain, how come we to find him at the conclusion of his temptations at the very place where they began? Is it not natural to conclude, from this circumstance, that his removal from place to place was merely by visionary representation? Nor did the *time* allow of his going to these different places in any other manner. For though the whole time of Christ's continuing in the wilderness exposed to temptation, was forty days, as St. Mark affirms (*b*), yet those particular temptations specified by St. Matthew and St. Luke, did not begin till he

(*a*) *The devil departed from him for a season. And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee, Luke iv. 13, 14.*

(*b*) *He was there in the wilderness forty days tempted of Satan, Mark i. 13.*

ideal and visionary. They were the subject matter of Christ's vision, or of that symbolical and emblematical revelation which was now made to Christ by the Spirit. Never would interpreters have construed that as a history of outward occurrences, which was manifestly intended as a description of a vision; had they considered, that by Christ's being brought into a wilderness *in* or *by the Spirit*, we are to understand his being conveyed there by prophetic inspiration, and by that particular mode of inspiration which was by vision, as distinct from every other species of revelation. For, if he was carried into the wilderness in vision, that he might be tempted of the devil, and was so tempted during his vision, then every thing that occurs concerning his temptation by the devil was a visionary representation*. The meaning of the

he had been tempted forty days, as both these evangelists inform us (c). Those temptations must therefore have been proposed to Christ, not after the forty days were expired, and at three different times, as some, without any manner of reason, have supposed; but after the commencement of the fortieth day, and yet before the expiration of it. But in so short a time, how was it possible that Christ should hold a conversation with the devil, first in the wilderness of Jordan, next upon the top of the temple of Jerusalem, and at last upon a high mountain, and, after travelling to such distant places, return again to that from which he set out at first?

* Were we even to allow, that Christ was brought into a wilderness personally and corporeally (and not mentally only), yet on this supposition,

(c) *When he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterwards an hungred. And when the tempter came unto him, &c. Mat. iv. 2, 3. Being forty days tempted of the devil. And when they were ended, he afterwards hungred. And the devil said unto him, &c. Luke iv. 2, 3.*

the evangelists is plainly this: "Jesus was brought into a wilderness by a supernatural operation of the Spirit, in vision; which (in part at least) consisted in a seeming appearance of the devil to him, carrying him to different places, and urging various temptations: and the making this representation to the mind of Christ was the special end of his prophetic vision." It would not therefore be more unreasonable to construe the prophetic visions of Ezekiel and St. John referred to above, as relations of a series of outward occurrences, than it is to put the like construction upon this vision of Christ, since both are introduced in the same manner, that is, with express declarations to the contrary.

But if Christ's temptation was only a visionary representation, some may be ready to object; "Why is it said, that he was led into the wilderness *to be tempted of the devil*? And why is the devil described as coming to him, and tempting him accordingly, and taking him from one place to another, just in the same manner as if he had been really present, and actually done these things? Whether this transaction passed in vision or not, the reality of Satan's agency is still the same, on either supposition. His agency is clearly and strongly asserted; which can never be reconciled with the opinion here maintained, that the whole transaction was entirely a divine vision."

supposition, what is called his temptation by the devil was a divine vision or revelation, the effect of that prophetic afflatus he was now under, and its declared intention.

The answer to these objections may be gathered from what was said above concerning the nature of prophetic visions, and the manner in which they are related in Scripture. In a vision, the *images* of things appear, not the *objects themselves*; and therefore the devil was not really and personally present with Christ, but only in mental representation; and consequently could act no part in this whole transaction. If what is here said concerning his presence and agency be a reality, and not a mental exhibition, this was no vision. But though there was no real presence or agency of Satan upon this occasion, yet was his image now placed before the imagination of Christ, and he seemed to him to say and do all that is ascribed to him in the history; which was, *in effect*, the same thing with regard to Christ, as if this had been the very case, and the devil had appeared and tempted him in person, and translated him from place to place by his proper agency. It is for this reason that the history affirms that the devil did all these things. In all visions, (as in all dreams, which may be considered as natural visions,) the images pass for the objects they represent, make the same impression, and answer the same end with them; and in correspondence to these inward views and apprehensions of the prophet is the narrative of his visions always framed. He takes them for facts, and they are related as such, as we have shewn in a great variety of instances*. The evangelists, therefore, in ascribing

* See above, p. 29—32. and p. 57, &c. and below, p. 86, &c.

the temptation to the devil, have used no other language than what it was to be expected they would use, no other than what was common on all such occasions. Having told us that Christ was carried into a wilderness in a prophetic vision, they then explain the visionary representation, which was, *his being tempted by the devil*, who accordingly is said to come to him, to remove him from one place to another, and to propose to him different temptations. Nothing more, as we have already shewn, could be intended by this language, than to specify and describe the *nature* of Christ's prophetic vision, which consisted of a representation of Satan as appearing and acting in the manner stated in the history. Christ's being assaulted by Satan in this manner, was the *scenery* or appearance of things, which was placed before his mind by a divine hand; and could not therefore be an outward transaction, though, agreeably to the style of Scripture, it is related as such.

Some have thought, that if the entire scenery or vision was divine, the evangelist would have said, that *the Spirit* took or carried Jesus to Jerusalem, and that *the Spirit* translated him from thence to a high mountain, and not that *the devil* did these things. This objection is owing to their not distinguishing between *the author* of this vision, and *the scenes* that composed it. The history, which expressly refers the vision to God's Spirit, describes the scenes just such as they were presented to Christ, and could not properly do otherwise. It was necessary, therefore,

fore, that the history of them should recite the apparent agency of Satan, in order to its corresponding to the views and apprehensions of Christ, and truly representing the scenes of his vision.

The evangelists Matthew and Luke close their account of these scenes, which were representations of the devil's temptations, by saying *the devil departed from Christ* *. But nothing more can be understood hereby, than that the image of the devil now disappeared, or that *the vision which he had seen went up from him* †. Such language as this cannot be mistaken, by those who remember, that images impressed, and actions performed upon a prophet's imagination, are always related in the same manner as if they had been real objects and outward transactions, and that the temptation of Christ is declared by all the evangelists to be a prophetic trance and revelation ‡.

This

* Mat. iv. 11. Luke iv. 13.

† Ezek. xi. 24.

‡ St. Luke (ch. iv. 13.) says, *The devil departed from Christ for a season*; which, if strictly understood, seems to imply, both that the devil was personally present with Christ before his departure from him for a season, and that after a season he returned to him again in person. But that the devil was not personally present with Christ at this time, when it is said he departed from him for a season, has been shewn already. And those who say he was now personally present with him, do not allow that he was so at any subsequent period, or that the devil ever assaulted Christ in the *same* manner they suppose he did at this time. On the contrary, they maintain that Satan, finding himself unable to prevail against Christ by his own personal assault, stirred up Judas to betray, and the Jewish rulers to persecute him. See John xiv. 30. ch. xiii. 2. Luke xxii. 53.

This passage of Scripture then is to be understood as a history, not of an outward transaction, but of the scenes and representations of a vision. As such the writers of the gospel expressly represent it, without leaving us (as the sacred penmen have been thought to do in other instances) to collect it from the nature and circumstances of the relation. They likewise represent this vision, not as diabolical, but divine, ascribing it to the Spirit of God. So that to all the other arguments urged above, we may add (what we before promised to produce) the authority of the evangelists, and the express letter of the text,

Now, if the passage before us refers, as the advocates of the common interpretation maintain it does, to those persecutions which Christ suffered from his enemies at the close of his ministry, this does not answer the account given of it above, as importing the personal return and appearance of the devil to Christ; and consequently, if it contains an objection against our hypothesis, that objection holds against their own. Against the former it has no force. For, the temptations of the devil in this vision being (as will be shewn in the sequel) predictions and prefigurations of those trials which Christ was afterwards to undergo in the course of his ministry, it was natural to close the history of the former by taking notice of the relation they bore to the latter. Whether, by those words which we render *for a season*, St. Luke designed to intimate that *after* that season Christ was to be actually assaulted by those temptations which were now foretold, or whether they ought to be rendered *until the season* (*αχρι καιρου*), and refer to the season itself appointed for the accomplishment of these predictions; on either supposition, it was St. Luke's intention to inform us, that those severe trials which were predicted and prefigured by the temptations of the devil, in the scenes of this vision, did accordingly overtake Christ in the course of his succeeding ministry.

in confutation of those who misconstrue Christ's temptation, either as an outward transaction, or as an illusion of Satan*. Nor are the evangelists at all answerable

* Should it be objected, that by asserting the visionary nature of Christ's temptation, while we allow the reality of his forty days' fast, and subsequent hunger, the history appears a confused mixture of facts and visions, I answer, that there are certain rules by which facts and visions may (very generally at least) be distinguished from each other, which were laid down above, p. 32. If the historian makes no particular and express declaration that what he relates as matter of fact is only a vision, we are to be determined by the nature and scope of the relation. But in the present case the language of the sacred penmen guards us from mistake. By telling us that Christ was carried into a wilderness by a miraculous operation of the Spirit *in vision*, to be tempted of the devil, they lead us to conceive of every part of the temptation as visionary. But this declaration does not affect any other branch of the history, which ought therefore to be literally understood, as the nature and intention of the facts themselves manifestly require.

It is further urged, "that it is unnatural to suppose Christ was carried into a wilderness *spiritually*, in order to his having a visionary representation of the devil's temptations, inasmuch as there intervened the space of forty days between his supposed spiritual rapture into a wilderness and those temptations; in which intervening space of time Christ's fast and hunger, which we allow to be real occurrences, took place." But though there was indeed the space of forty days between Christ's being carried into a desert in vision, and those particular temptations which are recorded by St. Matthew and St. Luke, (probably because they referred to Christ's *public ministry*, while they omitted others of a more personal and private nature,) yet we are expressly told by St. Mark (ch. i. 13.), *That he was there in the wilderness* (that wilderness into which the Spirit drove him, in a state of trance or ecstasy. See above, p. 61, 62, 63.) *forty days tempted of the devil*. And since we have proved, that, by his being tempted by the devil, we are to understand his
having

answerable for those misconstructions which have been put upon it.

But some, perhaps, may still imagine, that this state of the case, while it solves some difficulties, raises others; since it may seem hard to conceive that a divine hand should present such scenes as these before the mind of Christ, or what purposes worthy the wisdom of God could be thereby answered. This brings us,

having a representation of the devil as coming to him, and proposing temptations, he must have been during the entire space of forty days under the power of a divine vision. The other circumstances of the history, instead of destroying, confirm this opinion. His being supported forty days without food, and without feeling the sensation of hunger, was itself a perpetual miracle wrought upon his body, and one very proper to preserve his mind in the most fit state for receiving supernatural communications from God. Towards the close of the fortieth day, the divine power was suspended, and Christ was permitted to feel the sensation of hunger, in order to prepare the way to the first temptation (just as Peter became very hungry before his vision of the sheet containing all manner of animals, Acts x. 10.), and to give him a juster sense of what was afterwards to befall him. And lastly, Christ's miraculous protection through the whole space of forty days, from the commencement to the conclusion of his vision, during which he could be in no capacity of defending himself (as was observed above, p. 63.), agrees better with our hypothesis than with any other. Now, if Christ's vision commenced at the time of his being carried into a wilderness in the spirit, and continued through the entire space of forty days, till it was closed with those representations of Satan described by St. Matthew and St. Luke, the objection under consideration falls to the ground.

SECTION IV.

To examine the proper intention of this prophetic vision. Here I will endeavour to shew, that the several scenes which it contains, though presented to Christ in the form, and capable of answering the end, of a present trial, were directly intended as a symbolical prediction and representation of the future difficulties of his office and ministry. But what occurs in this and the former section, I offer with a just diffidence; and having no guide to follow, it behoves me to proceed with caution, and to prepare the way for the proof of what is advanced, by premising a few general observations.

1. It may be observed, that Christ was liable to temptations. This is plainly implied in that declaration of Christ to his disciples, *Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations**; and expressly asserted in the epistle to the Hebrews, *He himself hath suffered, being tempted†*. In terms of yet larger import it is said, *He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin‡*. There is in these several passages a very peculiar reference to the outward sufferings and persecutions which he underwent§. But these were not the only trials to which he was exposed. The most innocent affections, the desire of esteem, the dread of poverty or reproach,

* Luke xxii. 28.

† Heb. iv. 15.

‡ Heb. ii. 18.

§ See above, sect. 1. p. 15.

resentment against injury or wickedness, and other passions belonging to our original frame, whenever they interfere with the conviction of duty, cannot but serve for our trial, whether we will be governed by them or by conscience. And therefore amongst innumerable other triumphs of the Redeemer's virtue, we read, that *he did not seek his own glory**, that he *became poor for our sakes*†, that he tempered his *anger* with compassion‡, endured the *shame*§ as well as torture of the cross, and restrained his own inclinations out of regard to the benefit of others, for *he pleased not himself*||. In a word, there is no passion, if it be not kept under discipline, which may not hold us back from our duty, or lead us into sin. The first Adam, though he came out of the hands of his Maker in a state of innocence, was liable to temptations, and he fell by them; the second Adam was as liable to them as the first, though he overcame them. This observation (which is not always carried to its just extent) is very necessary to the right understanding of this passage, whether it describes a present or foretels a future trial; It may likewise serve to illustrate many other passages of Scripture, and to set the character of our Redeemer in a just point of light; for his merit rises in proportion to the number and

* John vii. 14.

† 2 Cor. viii. 9.

‡ Mark iii. 5. *And when he had looked round about on them with anger, συλλυπουμενος, at the same time grieving for the hardness of their hearts.* He was at once touched both with displeasure and compassion at the malice and obstinacy of the Pharisees.

§ Heb. xii. 2.

|| Rom. xv. 3.

strength of those temptations which he overcame. We may observe farther,

2. That it is possible this vision might contain a present trial*. The two most common ways in which God revealed himself to the prophets, were visions and dreams†. In both these, the divine will was generally communicated by emblematical images and appearances‡; and therefore they are opposed to a direct and plain revelation, in which there was no enigmatical or parabolical representation§. But there was this difference between visions and dreams: in a dream, the inspired person was asleep, all his external senses were bound up, and the ordinary operation of his reason suspended; but in a vision, he was awake, and had the regular exercise of his understanding and judgment||. This kind of inspiration was called vision

* How far, and in what sense, this vision might be a present trial, is shewn in the Appendix, No. V.

† Numb. xii. 6. Joel ii. 28.

‡ Dan. viii. 1—10. 15. Gen. xxviii. 12. ch. xl. 9—11. 16, 17. ch. xli. 1—7. Hos. xii. 10. Visions and dreams seem sometimes to have succeeded one another, Gen. xv. 1. 12. Dan. vii. 1, 2. ch. viii. 16—18.

§ Numb. xii. 6—8.

|| It has, indeed, been generally said, that in visions as well as in dreams, the external senses were laid asleep; but as this is said without evidence, so it destroys the distinction between these two different methods of revelation. In a vision, I grant, the mind of the prophet was so ingrossed by the striking scenes that were presented to it, as to render him quite regardless of the external objects around him; but inasmuch as he was awake, the ordinary exercise of his understanding could not be suspended, as it is when the external senses

vision or sight*, probably not from any use made of the bodily sight, but on account of the analogy between these two methods of information; vision exciting images within us, or enabling the mind to perceive objects, no less than the corporeal faculty of seeing. For this reason prophets are often called *seers*†. And though the representations of a vision are only as the images of things in a glass, in which we do not behold the things themselves; yet vision gives as clear a view of what it represents, as if it was the very thing itself, and the notice of it was conveyed by the senses. What is imaginary no way differs in appearance from that which is real, and has the same effect upon the prophet; who does not at the time distinguish between the images of a vision, and outward objects‡. If the mind be passive, as no doubt

senses are asleep. See Numb. xxiv. 2—4. 16. The senses indeed were not used in a vision; but if they were in any measure bound up in it by a supernatural agency, this could only be done in order to prevent the mind from being diverted by outward objects and occasions, and to engage its attention more closely to those miraculous scenes which were spread before it.

* I here speak of vision, as distinguished from every other species of revelation, not as it denotes prophecy or inspiration in general, or any extraordinary discovery of the mind of God. Is. i. 1. 2 Sam. vii. 4—17. Prov xxix. 18.

† 1 Sam. ix. 9.

‡ See above, Sect. 1. p. 32, note †. In confirmation of what is there argued at large in proof of this point, I add, that when Saul had a vision of Ananias come in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight, Acts ix. 12. this was an exact representation of what was afterwards actually done. And Saul, though now blind,

doubt it is, in receiving these images, and cannot but judge according to appearances, let it be remembered, that just thus it is with regard to the impression made by external objects themselves, and the ideas they raise in the mind, the will having no more power to control our inward views and apprehensions, in this latter case, than in the former. And as in both cases the mind is alike passive in receiving impressions, so in all other respects it may enjoy an equal liberty in both. Whether the notice of things is conveyed to it by the instrumentality of the senses, or by a miraculous agency, it may experience the same dispositions and sentiments with regard to the things themselves. It may be as capable of a rational determination and choice, with respect to the representations of a vision, as with respect to the objects of sense: and, consequently, the one may serve for the trial, display, and improvement of virtue, no less than the other.

This account of the nature of prophetic visions is confirmed by the behaviour of those who have been favoured with them. During the supernatural illumination of their understandings, they were free from that ecstatic disorder and confusion of mind, as well as from those convulsive agitations of body, with

saw Ananias as clearly in representation or vision as he did when he appeared to him visibly, upon the recovery of his sight. This is one proof, amongst many others, that the miraculous scenes of a vision were not (always, if ever) placed before the bodily eye, but were discerned by the *mind*, without the assistance of the corporeal organ.

which

which the pretences to prophecy and divination amongst the Pagans were attended. As their reason was not disturbed, so their passions worked in a natural way, and were affected by the scenes of a vision, just as they would have been by outward objects of a similar nature presented to their senses*. They argued and acted with as much freedom, force, and propriety, as they could have done at any other time. Thus, † when *the word of the Lord came unto Abraham in a vision, saying, I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward*; Abraham very rationally represented to God, how little the greatest riches would avail him, if he must at last leave them to the inheritance of a *servant*. And when God promised him, that a *son of his own body* should become his heir, and *brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars†, if thou be able to number them*; adding, *so shall thy seed be*; Abraham *believed in the Lord*, upon due consideration

* See Gen. xv. 12, 13. ch. xvii. 17. Isa. xxi. 3, 4. Jer. xxiii. 9. Dan. x. 11, 12. 16, 17. Acts xviii. 9. ch. xxiii. 11. and compare Exod. iii. 3. Dan. v. 5. Acts xxvi. 19.

† Gen. xv. 1—6.

‡ This language, *God brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars*, confirms what was observed above, Sect. 1. p. 30, &c. that the representations of a vision are related as facts, and justifies the explication given of the language both of the prophet Ezekiel and of the evangelists, Sect. 3. For that this was nothing more than a visionary representation, is certain from its being called a vision, ver. 1; and from this farther circumstance, that the sun was not yet gone down, v. 12. and consequently the stars were not visible to the eye,

of the omnipotence and truth of God, who *counted it to him for righteousness*, while he was yet under the vision. In like manner, when St. Peter* had a visionary representation of a large sheet, let down as it were from heaven, full of abundance of animals, clean and unclean, all mixed together, and was bid to take his choice and satisfy his hunger, he startles at the proposal, and remonstrates just as he would have done had it been a real scene, not a visionary one; *Not so, Lord, for I have never eaten any thing common or unclean*: for he was not yet aware, that the Jewish law was no longer, in any part of it, obligatory upon Christians†. It were both a needless and an endless task to adduce all the other examples‡ of this kind which the Scripture affords, since, amongst the numerous visions it records, I do not recollect one in which the prophet does not discover a sound

* Acts x. 10—14.

† When St. Peter had this vision, it is said, *He fell into an ecstasy*. A *prophetic ecstasy*, therefore, denotes not an alienation of mind or loss of reason, nor any transport of fear, wonder, or other passion, but that state the mind is in when it receives extraordinary divine communications by vision. See above, p. 70. The passions excited in the prophets were as various as the objects which their visions presented.

‡ Those, however, who desire more instances, may compare St. Paul's behaviour when he had a vision of Christ in the temple, Acts xxii. 17—20, with his behaviour when he had an actual sight of him on his way to Damascus, ch. ix. 4—6; and they will find both to be equally rational. Or they may consult Ezek. i. 28. ch. iii. 14. ch. iv. 9—14. ch. xl. 4, and the passages referred to above, p. 86, note *.

understanding, and make the same reflections upon the imaginary scenes which passed before him, as he would have done had they been real. And if this was the case with the other prophets, during their visions, it is reasonable to suppose it was the same with Christ during his, and consequently he was capable of returning a rational answer to the proposals made to him in vision, in the manner the history represents; and his rejecting them would *discover* and *display* the virtuous affections and principles by which he was governed: and so far this vision would serve as a present trial. This, however, could not be its direct intention, as is shewn in the appendix*.

3. This vision was properly designed as a prediction and symbolical representation of the particular difficulties and temptations he was to meet with in the execution of his office, and in the exercise of his miraculous powers, as the Messiah. If we examine the other visions recorded in Scripture, we shall find, that all the images they contained were not designed for their own sakes, without any farther intention and reference, but that they were symbols or emblems, that is, signs and representations of other things†. By these images and emblems God was pleased to signify and express moral instructions, and to foretel and prefigure future events. From hence it will follow, that if the temptation of Christ was a divine

* No. V.

† See the Appendix, No. IV. where many proofs of the prophetic and symbolical nature of visions in general are produced.

vision, as we have already proved it to be, we must allow in general, that the images presented to him in it were symbolical, or relative to some other matters of which they were an apt representation, unless we will interpret this vision in a manner different from all other visions.

But if the vision of Christ was figurative and parabolical, it may very naturally be inquired, What is the particular intention of it? and how is this to be learnt? I answer, that as it is nowhere explained in Scripture, the proper meaning of it must be collected from the nature and circumstances of the vision itself, as was usual in the like cases. When the images of a vision bore an obvious meaning, and clearly pointed out the particular instruction they were designed to convey, no formal explanation was given*. The inquiry here therefore must be, What do the images or signs in this vision most naturally denote? to what do the symbols most nearly correspond? And if it should appear, when we proceed to examine the particular scenes of this vision, that there is a perfect correspondence and resemblance between them and the

* When Daniel had seen the vision of the ram and he-goat, he sought for the meaning, and it was explained to him. Dan. viii. 15—17. But when St. Peter doubted in himself, what his vision (cited above, p. 87.) should mean, no formal explanation of it was given, though it was designed for his own information. He was only directed to go with the messengers of Cornelius; which was sufficient to guide him to the true interpretation of his vision, Acts x. 17—20. Nor did St. Paul's vision, Acts xvi. 9, 10. receive or require any explanation.

several temptations to which Christ was exposed, in the exercise of his ministry and miraculous powers, it may fairly be inferred, that the former were designed as a prediction and prefiguration of the latter. But should it be ever so clearly demonstrated, that this vision contains a representation of the future difficulties of Christ's public ministry, this will rather confirm than overthrow the opinion of its answering at the same time the end of a present trial; since the very prospect of those difficulties would constitute a very great trial. And surely the wisdom of God might frame such scenes, as should be both probationary in their own nature, and prophetic or symbolical in their principal intention. This leads me to add,

4. That such scenes as this vision contains, whether considered as probationary or prophetic, might be presented to Christ by a divine hand, without any unworthy imputation upon the divine holiness or goodness. Nothing is more certain, than that *God does not tempt any man**, in the criminal sense of that expression; he never acts with an intention of seducing men into sin; nay, he does every thing consistent with the rules of his moral government to guard them against it. And in this sense of the word, the scenes of this vision did not contain a present temptation; they were not designed to seduce Christ into sin†. Nevertheless, there is a sense of

* James i. 13.

† See Appendix, No. V.

the word, in which God does *tempt** men; that is, he proposeth to them suitable trials for the discovery, display, and improvement of their piety and obedience. Thus God tempted, or made trial of, Abraham†. And thus he tempteth or trieth all men, having endued them with those affections, and placed them in those circumstances, which necessarily constitute a trial of their integrity. Nor are these trials unworthy of God; but are indeed the very means he uses to exercise, confirm, and perfect our virtue. And trials might be proposed to the Son of God, with the same general intention as they are to the children of men; for *though a Son, yet learned he obedience, by the things which he suffered*‡. It could not therefore be unworthy of God to spread such scenes before the mind of Christ, as should serve to exercise, to discover, and display his virtue; the only sense in which we assert them to be probationary§. But what alone would be a full vindication of the divine conduct in the present case is, that the scenes of this vision were designed to represent the temptations of his future ministry, such as it could not be unworthy of God to place before his view, because they were no other than what God saw fit actually to appoint. They

* The word *πειραζειν* imports nothing more, in its primary signification, than *πειραν λαβειν*, *periculum facere*, to make a *trial*, *essay*, or *proof* of something. Acts xxiv. 6. 2 Cor. xiii. 5. Heb. xi. 17. But even in this sense of the word, when God is said to tempt men, this is not designed for his own information, but to serve the ends of his moral government.

† Gen. xxii. 1.

‡ Heb. v. 8.

§ See Appendix, No. V.

sprang from a divine constitution, were the natural consequence of the humanity of Christ, of the office and powers with which he was invested by the Father, and the wise rules by which he was to conduct himself in the exercise of them. So that he was placed by God in those trying circumstances which this vision represented. And as the proposals, which were afterwards to occur in real life, now appeared to be made to him by the *devil*; the manifest intention of the vision was to lead him into a just conception of those proposals, as criminal in their nature, and on that account fit to be rejected*. The very nature of the representation is a full proof that it was not intended to seduce Christ into sin, but to guard him against it. Besides, the best ends were to be answered (as we shall endeavour to evince) by this prediction and representation of such future events as were to befall him; and therefore it must be esteemed worthy to proceed from the Spirit, not of delusion, but of holiness, truth and wisdom†.

Having premised these general observations, I proceed now (as I proposed) distinctly to examine the several scenes of this prophetic vision, in order to point out the peculiar intention of each, and to shew, that though they might contain a present trial‡, yet
that

* See the Appendix, No. VI.

† With regard to the objection made to the representation of Satan's promise of the world to Christ, see the Appendix, No. VII.

‡ Should it appear doubtful to any, whether the several scenes of this vision were probationary in their nature, and answered the
end

that they were directly and properly designed as symbolical predictions and representations of the future difficulties of Christ's office and ministry.

I. In the first of these prophetic scenes, the great adversary* of mankind seemed to approach our Redeemer, and to accost him in the following manner: *If thou be (or inasmuch† as thou art) the Son of God (or the Messiah‡) command that these stones be made bread.* Christ having already continued fasting forty days and forty nights together; and the divine power,

end of a present trial; this will not affect what is urged in support of their being a prediction and prefiguration of Christ's future trials; which is here asserted to be their proper intension.

* When God revealed to Abraham in a deep sleep the afflictions of his posterity, they were represented by the horror of *great darkness*, Gen. xv. 12, 13. But what more natural emblem of temptations could there be, than the image of the *great tempter*?

† It is generally thought, that these words imply a doubt in the devil, whether Jesus was the Messiah; or that they were intended to raise such a doubt in the breast of Jesus himself. But that the devil could not doubt who Jesus was, has been shewn above, sect. I. p. 11. note*. And when we consider what express testimonies were borne to Christ at his baptism, it appears impossible that Jesus himself should entertain any doubt about his own character. In those words, *If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread*, it is taken for granted, that he was the Son of God; and he is prompted to act as became him under that character. See the note here referred to.

‡ That the Messiah and the Son of God are equivalent terms, or were understood to denote the same person, will appear by comparing Mat. xxvi. 63. Luke xxii. 67. 70. John i. 34. 41. 49. Mat. xvi. 16. Mark viii. 29. Acts viii. 37. See Ps. ii. 7, from whence the Jews might learn to apply this title, *the Son of God*, to the Messiah. Compare Dan. iii. 25. and 2 Esdr. ii. 47.

by which his body had hitherto been sustained without any nourishment, being withdrawn; he now began to feel the keen sensations of hunger*: and he was still in a barren desert, remote from all the ordinary means of sustenance. In these circumstances it was suggested to him by the tempter, "That it was very unsuitable to his dignity and peculiar relation to the Father, to remain destitute of the necessary supports of life; and that it became him to exert the miraculous powers with which he was invested as the Messiah, for his own immediate relief." What temptation could be more specious than this? Why might not the Son of the most High, when he felt the severe pressure of bodily wants, and had no prospect of a supply in the ordinary way, exert his power for so important a purpose as self-preservation?

Yet, forcible as this temptation was, it was rejected, and upon the justest principles; as appears from the following reply of our Lord: *Man shall not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God†, or by every thing that God may appoint.* These words, which are borrowed from the writings of Moses, refer to the case of the Israelites in the wilderness, and assign the reason of

* This circumstance was proper to prepare the way to the present temptation, and to give it force. Compare Acts x. 10, where we read that St. Peter *became very hungry*, just before his vision of the sheet containing all manner of living creatures.

† Deut. viii. 3.

God's feeding them there with manna from heaven. In this connection they are very applicable to the case of our Lord, and are to be understood as comprising in them the following argument: "If God, when he led the Israelites into the wilderness, did not suffer them to perish in it, but interposed in a miraculous manner for their supply, and fed them with manna, (which, though a light kind of food, gave their bodies as much vigour as the bread and flesh of Egypt,) in order to convince them that he could sustain this animal life, not by bread only, but by whatever other means he should see fit to appoint and provide, or even without any natural means at all, by his own efficacious word or will alone*: why then should I, from a distrust either of his power or providential goodness, undertake to supply my own wants in a manner which he has not prescribed? I may reasonably hope that he will not be less ready, at the proper season, to interpose on my behalf than he was on theirs; especially as I have hitherto had experience of his power in protecting me from the dangers of the wilderness, and in sustaining me without food for forty days together. In this exigence, I will trust in God; persuaded that he will himself rather work a miracle in my favour than suffer me to want necessary sustenance." Thus did our Lord, from a principle of resignation to God,

* As in the case of Moses, *Exod. xxiv. 18. Deut. ix. 9. 18*; of Elijah, *1 Kings xix. 8*; and of Christ, *Mat. iv. 2*; each of whom fasted forty days.

and reliance on his power and care, refuse to turn stones into bread. And his piety was speedily rewarded by a miraculous supply of food, provided for him by God*. For, when the temptation was ended, *the angels came and ministered unto him*†. And does it not appear, from what has already been offered under this head, that this first scene in Christ's vision was probationary, and served to discover the present turn and temper of his mind?

No less evident does it seem that this scene was prophetic, and had a reference to his future ministry, through the whole course of which he was pressed with the same kind of temptations, and resisted them upon the same principles. This part of the vision very naturally conveyed this general instruction; "That Christ, though the Son of God, was to struggle with the afflicting hardships of hunger and thirst, and all the other evils of humanity, like the lowest of the sons of men: and that he was never to exert his divine power for his own personal relief, under the most pressing difficulties, or for the supply of his most urgent occasions; but with resignation and faith to wait for the interposition of God in his favour." Accordingly we find that Christ regulated

* Compare 1 Kings xix. 5.

† Mat. iv. 11. The word *διακονεῖν*, here rendered to *minister*, very often signifies, *to minister food, or to wait at table*. Mat. viii. 15. Luke xvii. 8. ch. xxii. 27. John xii. 2. Numerous instances of this use of the word in heathen authors are produced by *Hetstein* upon the place.

his conduct by this maxim. He did not subsist by miracles; but though rich in the possession of a power capable of controlling all the laws of nature, though heir and lord of all, he became poor, lived an indigent life, without any settled habitation or certain provision*. He knew how much more blessed it is to give than to receive, and yet disdained not to accept kindness from others, or even to stand indebted to their bounty for his own support†. In some circumstances he felt the pressure of hunger‡, without having food to eat; at other times he had no leisure to take any, through a zealous application to the duties of his office, such as was not to be interrupted by the pressing calls of nature. He chose rather to deny himself necessary refreshment than lose an opportunity of healing and instructing the multitude§. And neither on these, nor on any other occasion, did he relieve himself by a miracle. This is the more extraordinary, as he interposed with readiness in the behalf of others, who daily rejoiced in the temporal as well as spiritual benefit of his divine power; and at different times fed the hungry multitudes in the desert, by a miraculous increase of his own slender provisions||. Nor did he only endure hunger and thirst, but all the other evils incident to human nature. He lived a laborious and led an

* Mat. viii. 20.

† Luke viii. 3.

‡ Mark xi. 12.

§ Mark iii. 20, 21. ch. vi. 31—34. Mat. xiv. 13, 14.

|| Mat. xv. 33, 34. Mark viii. 4, 5. Mat. xiv. 16, 17. Mark vi. 37, 38.

itinerant life. Instead of commanding angels to his service, he submitted to the inconveniences and fatigue* of travelling on foot from one part of Judea and Galilee to another, and was tossed about by tempests at sea. He was exhausted† by the incessant labours of his ministry, and that intense application of mind with which he engaged in it. After performing tiresome journeys, and preaching to the crowds which followed him, in the day; he often spent a considerable part of the night, sometimes the whole of it, in earnest prayer to God‡, and in the open air; notwithstanding the copious dews, which fall by night in those parts, must have been very dangerous, especially when the body was heated by the exercise of the preceding day. So many injuries did his constitution suffer, that the crasis or texture of his blood was destroyed, and sweated through every pore of his body§. And to such a degree was he enfeebled by the violences to which he patiently submitted, as to be unable to bear his cross||. He, who in so many thousand instances renewed the

* John iv. 6.

† Dr. Lardner, in the first volume of his Supplement to 'The Credibility of the Gospel History,' p. 203, observes, that our Lord's sleeping in the midst of a storm was owing to his undertaking the voyage in the evening, after the fatigue of long discourses in public, and without any refreshment. Mark iv. 36—38.

‡ Luke vi. 12. The justly celebrated Mr. Jos. Mede (Works, p. 67.) and other eminent critics render, *ἐν τῇ προσευχῇ τοῦ Θεοῦ*, in an oratory of God. But these oratories were open at the top.

§ Luke xxii. 44.

|| Mat. xxvii. 32.

health and vigour of others, never exerted any miraculous power either to preserve or restore his own, but sunk under the pressure of his infirmities! In all his exigencies he referred himself to God. Even under that great extremity, his agony in the garden, he sought and waited for the interposition of God; who, in answer to his prayer, sent an angel from heaven to strengthen him*. And when the hour of his death approached, he used no means for his rescue†, but meekly resigned himself into the hands of his most malicious enemies, in obedience to his Father's will.

The divine powers with which Christ was invested were designed as the seal of his mission; and accordingly they were never applied to a different purpose. This strict appropriation of his miracles to their proper intention served to point it out more clearly, and to keep it in constant view; to manifest the wisdom and necessity of the works themselves, and to preserve their dignity and authority, which would have been impaired, if not destroyed, by a more general application of them. As Christ never applied them to any purpose foreign to their grand intention; so it was in a very peculiar manner necessary that they should never be employed to protect himself from the calamities and distresses to which human nature is incident. Had he, when made in the likeness of men, saved himself by miracles from

* Luke xxii. 43.

† Mat. xxvi. 52, 53, 54. John xviii. 6.

the evils of humanity; where had been his conflict, his victory, his triumph? or where the consolation and benefit his followers derive from his example, his merit, his crown? Sufferings were the theatre on which he displayed his divine virtues*, and they were both the ground of his advancement to the glorious office of our Redeemer†, and a natural means of inspiring him with compassion‡ to all who were to follow him§.

II. In the second scene of this vision||, *the devil taketh Christ into the holy city, Jerusalem, and setteth him on the wing¶ of the temple, and saith unto him, If thou be (or, since thou art) the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written***, *He shall give his angels charge concerning thee, and in their hands shall they bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.*

* Heb. v. 8. cited above, p. 91.

† *And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.* Heb. v. 9. see ch. ii. 10.

‡ Heb. ii. 17, 18. ch. iv. 15.

§ What is urged under this head, answers the old objection of the Jews to Christ, when he was hanging on the cross, from his not using his power for his own protection and safety, as it may be thought a wise man ought to have done: an objection that has been repeated in every age from that day to this, by the adversaries of the gospel, without reflecting, that his power of miracles was never designed for any such purpose. See Whitby on John xviii. 4.

|| Mat. iv. 5, 6.

¶ *πτερυγον*, the wing, not the *pinnacle*, as it is in the common translation. See Lightfoot's Works, vol. ii. p. 130. and above, Sect. I. p. 19, note †.

** Psal. cxi. 11.

It is generally supposed, that Christ is here called upon to expose his person to danger without any necessity, from a confidence in the protection of the Almighty, which he, as the Son of God, had peculiar reason to expect; since even to good men God had promised the guardianship of his angels. But the proposal is very capable of a more comprehensive meaning. For the scene of this vision is different from the former, as several writers* have observed. Christ is not placed at the top of a high rock in the wilderness, where he already was; though, by throwing himself down from any formidable precipice in such a solitary place, the divine power must equally have interposed for his preservation, and his faith in that power been put to the trial. The scene of this temptation was Jerusalem, the metropolis of Judea, and the seat of power; it was the *temple* of Jerusalem, where the Jews expected the first appearance of their Messiah, that angel of the covenant, who was to come suddenly to it†; it was the *wing* of the temple, the eastern front of it, which commanded a view of the crowd of worshippers below. From this most public eminence, and before immense multitudes, not from the obscurities of the wilderness, is Christ required to throw himself down, in a dependence upon the divine protection, (which none could have so much reason to expect as the Son of God;) that so his miraculous preservation might give evidence of

* Dr. Lightfoot's and Dr. Macknight's Harmonies.

† Malachi iii. 1.

his divine mission, and induce the numerous worshippers, who were eye-witnesses of it, to acknowledge him immediately as the Messiah, visibly descending from heaven, in a manner agreeable to the expectation of the Jews. Such was the proposal here made to Christ; and in its own nature it certainly carried a very powerful temptation. How seemingly honourable and glorious would it have been for the Messiah, to have opened his commission upon such a public theatre, and with such demonstrations of divine power! Let us inquire therefore upon what principles this specious temptation was rejected.

In answer to the quotation from Scripture, by which the devil sought to inforce his temptation, our Lord replies, *It is written also, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God**. To tempt God, is to make an improper trial of his power, to make new and unreasonable demands upon it, after sufficient evidence has been already afforded; and to do this, not barely from presumption, but from distrust. In this sense the expression is often† used in Scripture, as well as in the particular instance referred to by our Lord‡.

His

* Mat. iv. 7.

† Exod. xvii. 2. 7. Numb. xiv. 22. Ps. lxxviii. 18. Ps. cvi. 14. 15. Mat. xvi. 1. Acts xv. 10.

‡ Deut. vi. 16. Moses does not here refer to any particular case, in which the Israelites were so properly chargeable with *presuming too far* upon the divine power and interposition in their favour, as with *distrusting* it. After all the demonstrations of the divine presence, in dividing the red-sea, in supplying them with manna, and going before them in the cloud, they still doubted, *Is the Lord amongst*

His meaning, therefore, must be this: "The Scripture forbids us to prescribe to God in what instances he shall exert his power: and as we are not to rush upon danger without a call, in expectation of an extraordinary deliverance; so neither are we to dictate to divine wisdom what miracles shall be wrought for men's conviction."

We are in the next place to inquire, what reference this scene might have to Christ's future ministry. Through the whole course of it, he was assaulted with temptations similar to that here proposed, and he repelled them upon the maxim here adopted. Instead of needlessly and unwarrantably running into danger, and then relying upon the divine power to extricate him, (which must have occasioned an unnecessary and endless multiplication of miracles,) we find him using the utmost caution in declining hazards; avoiding, as far as possible, whatever might exasperate his enemies, and even enjoining silence* with regard to his miracles, those seals of his mission, when the publication of them in some particular circumstances was likely, by raising envy or popular commotions, to inflame their minds yet more against him. We find him also disappointing their malice, by prudently retreating† out of its reach, till the appointed period of his ministry was fulfilled. So *us, or not?* Exod. xvii. 2—7. There might, however, be a mixture of presumption on this occasion, in daring to prescribe to God the time and manner in which he should interpose on their behalf.

* Mat. viii. 4. ch. xii. 15—21.

† John x. 39, 40. Mat. xii. 15. Mark iii. 7. John viii. 59.

that, although there were some instances in which he was protected from his adversaries in a miraculous manner*, and in which it was absolutely necessary he should be so protected, that he might not be cut off before the ends of his ministry were accomplished; yet, considering how eagerly the Jewish rulers were bent upon his destruction, and how often they attempted it†, those instances are very few, compared with what they must have been, had not Christ been perpetually attentive in his whole conduct to this maxim, *Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God*.

In producing the evidences of his divine mission, he still acted upon the same maxim, though he was often under the strongest temptation to depart from it. Instead of opening his commission at Jerusalem, and displaying all at once upon that grand theatre the powers with which he was invested; he performed his first miracle at Cana in Galilee, and made that obscure country, for a considerable time, the principal scene of his ministry. On this account he was blamed by his own brethren, as acting unsuitably to his extraordinary character and commission, and urged *to shew himself publicly to the world*‡. But as he was not influenced by ostentatious views, and was solicitous to answer the ends and fulfil the period of his ministry in a manner the least likely to create noise and dis-

* John viii. 20.

† Mat. xii. 14. Mark iii. 6. Luke vi. 11. John vii. 1. ch. vii. 25. 31, 32. ch. viii. 20. 37. 39. ch. x. 39, 40. ch. xi. 7—16. 45—57.

‡ John vii. 4.

turbance, or to give offence, he kept himself as private as the nature of his work would admit; sometimes retiring into deserts, where those who were desirous of his instructions were willing to follow him, and to sustain the inconveniences of hunger and thirst for several days together. Instead of courting the favour of the opulent and powerful, to engage them to countenance and support his cause, or challenging from the rulers of the Jewish nation the homage due to his high character, he did not bear a commission chiefly or particularly directed to them (an honour some of the antient prophets enjoyed), but conversed freely with all sorts of people, not only with the lowest, but with the worst, in order to bring them to repentance. When he had used sufficient means to satisfy the most scrupulous integrity, to win over those to the faith who were either piously disposed or willing to be reformed, agreeably to the commission he had received from Heaven, he would not proceed any farther. He refused to comply with the unreasonable demands of those who, notwithstanding all the proofs of his mission which had been already offered, still demanded farther evidence, and called *for signs from heaven**. Now these circumstances of Christ's ministry correspond to those in his prophetic vision, in which he was tempted to a public and ostentatious display of his miraculous powers. And his answer to this second temptation

* John ii. 18. Mat. xii. 38. Luke xi. 14. Mat. xvi. 1. Mark viii. 11.

contained a new limitation, under which those powers were to be used. Even in bringing men to the faith, he was not to exceed the order and appointment of God. And though the determination of God in this respect was certainly founded in the highest wisdom, which ever regulates all the operations of his power; though it was perfectly analogous to the other measures of his government over his moral creatures, who are not formed to religion and virtue by the utmost exertions of Omnipotence, but in such methods as are consistent with their freedom; and though it was well calculated to promote the credit and true interest of the gospel, to establish it on an evidence best adapted to its nature, and to win over those to the faith of it who were most likely to comply with its holy design; though this determination of God was wise and just, yet did it require the greatest humility, fortitude, and piety in him, who had the power of working miracles at pleasure, to acquiesce therein. Ambition and vain-glory could never have resisted the temptations that Christ was under to an incessant and unlimited exertion of his miraculous powers, by which he would have advanced his own honour, rendered his ministry more conspicuous and illustrious, forced universal conviction, and commanded the admiration and applause of the whole world. This temptation was the more difficult to be overcome, as, in consequence of the method which was taken, his doctrine was embraced only by a few well-disposed persons, and those generally in the lowest rank

rank of life *, while it was despised and persecuted by the rich and great, by the wise and learned, who were enslaved to prejudice, or governed by sensual and ambitious views.

III. In the third temptation the scene changes †, *and the devil taketh our Lord up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world ‡, and the glory of them: and saith unto*

* This circumstance gave occasion to the display of the most humble and amiable piety, Mat. xi. 25. 26.

† Mat. iv. 8, 9.

‡ Lucian, in relating his dream, says, ἀρβυς δὲ εἰς ὑψος ἐγὼ ἐπεσκοποῦν ἀπὸ τῆς ἐν ἀρξάμενης ἀχρι πρὸς ἑσπεραν, πολεις, καὶ ἐθνη, καὶ δημούς. Ego vero in sublime sublatus, ab oriente incipiens, ad occidentem usque contemplabar urbes, gentes et populos. Luciani Somnium, tom. i. p. 10, 11. ed. Var. Amstelodami, 1687. This language illustrates that of the evangelists, and serves to remove an objection urged by Dr. Whitby and others, "that if Christ had only a visionary representation of the kingdoms of the world, it was needless to take him into an exceeding high mountain, or even into any mountain at all." Notice was taken of this objection above, p. 24, at the end of note †. Rev. xxi. 10. is there cited, in order to shew that St. John was in like manner carried to a high mountain, to give him a prospect of Jerusalem. Ezekiel also says, ch. xl. 2. *In the visions of God brought he me into the land of Israel, and set me upon a very high mountain, by which was as the frame of a city on the south.* Will you here object, that it was needless to take St. John or Ezekiel to any eminence, as both might just as well have had their respective visions on a plain? Why then is it made an objection against the vision of Christ, that he is said to be carried to an eminence? But, in reality, neither was Jesus Christ, nor the apostle John, nor the prophet Ezekiel, carried to any mountain; but they appeared to themselves to be placed upon very high mountains, which gave somewhat of the appearance of nature to the extensiveness of the prospects shewn them. Accordingly Lucian in relating his dream uses similar language.

him,

him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.

How absurd soever the offer, which the devil here makes to Christ, must have appeared to him in other circumstances*, and consequently how little merit soever there might be in rejecting it, yet in a vision the objects presented to the imagination are apprehended to be real†, and actually to possess all the powers and properties they claim‡; and the mind judges concerning things according to their appearance at that time, and discovers the very same turn and temper as it would have done if the object had been real, and not imaginary. Hence it is that Christ does not dispute the devil's claim to the disposal of the world. The offer of it in these circumstances appeared to proceed from one able to make it good; and there was just the same merit in rejecting it, as if it had really done so. How great that merit was, may be judged by the largeness of the offer, which was nothing less than the empire and glory, not of Judea only, but of the whole universe. These objects were placed before Christ in their most alluring forms, and all comprised in one view, so as to strike his imagination in their full force. Nevertheless, the proposal was rejected the very instant it was made, and not

* See above, Sect. I. p. 9, 10, 11.

† See above, Sect. I. p. 30, 31, &c. and Sect. IV. p. 84, &c.

‡ And consequently, if the devil was represented as having the power of disposing of the empire of the world, this representation of him would appear as real as one perfectly conformable to his true nature. See the Appendix, No. VII. and VIII.

without a mixture of just indignation: *Get thee hence, Satan; for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve**. This reply was a proof of the most steady and exalted piety.

But the trial and discovery of his present temper was not the direct intention of this prophetic scene, which is to be considered as a presignification and warning of the like temptation, to which he was to be exposed in the course of his future ministry, during which he was called upon to prostitute himself, with all his miraculous endowments, to the service of Satan, for the sake of worldly honours. The Jewish nation expected their Messiah to deliver it from the yoke of servitude, to raise it to a pitch of grandeur superior to what it had ever enjoyed under their greatest monarchs, and to extend their conquests over all the heathen nations, to the very ends of the earth. As these were the expectations which the Jews entertained, so they were very solicitous that Jesus should answer them, and would have done every thing in their power to promote the success of such an undertaking. They even would have taken him by force, and made him a king†. And it is certain, that had his miraculous powers, which were wholly consecrated to the erecting the kingdom of God amongst men, been employed in paving his way to secular honour, he might not only have escaped

* Mat. iv. 10.

† John vi. 15.

sufferings and death, but easily ascended the throne of the universe. How readily would not only the Jews, but all other nations, have repaired to the standard of a prince, who by a miracle, by a word or silent volition only, could provide for his own armies*, or destroy those of his enemies†; and under whom therefore they might hope for all the rewards, without the usual toils and hazards of military achievements! How easily might he, who commanded from a fish that tribute he was to pay to the temple, have enriched himself and his followers with all the treasures of the world! “Why then,” it might have been suggested to him, “instead of spending your life in affliction, and then ending it upon the cross, will you not use your power for your own benefit, to deliver yourself from misery, and make yourself master of the world?” But this temptation did not at any time prevail over our Lord, notwithstanding the desire of honour, wealth, and dominion is natural to every human mind, and, however innocent in itself, is with greater difficulty than any other subjected to the control of reason and conscience; and notwithstanding *universal empire* carries with it charms almost irresistible, especially to noble and heroic minds, conscious of their superior wisdom and abilities, and of an intention to employ their power to the true ends for which it is bestowed. If any thing can heighten the virtue of despising worldly greatness,

* John vi. 11—13.

† Chap. xviii. 6. ch. ii. 15.

when it comes in competition with our duty; it is the being practised in circumstances of indigence, such as are infinitely beneath that rank to which our merit entitles us. And therefore to refuse, as our Saviour did, grandeur and royalty, and universal empire, while he was more destitute of the accommodations of life than even the beasts of the field or birds of the air*, and was struggling with poverty, reproach, and persecution in the cause of God, and had death itself in certain prospect before him (all which evils might have been avoided by a misapplication of his miraculous powers), was the highest act of virtue that humanity could exhibit.

Having endeavoured to shew, by a distinct examination of the several scenes of this vision, that each of them, while it contained the proposal of a present and urgent temptation, was a symbolical prediction and representation of such trials as he was to undergo in the course of his future ministry, I would add, that the account which has been given of it in this latter view, will be confirmed by reflecting on the peculiar propriety of it in such a view, *at this season*. Christ had been very lately consecrated to the high office of the Messiah by the baptism of his illustrious fore-runner, and at the same time invested and confirmed in this office by a voice from heaven, and amply qualified for it by an unlimited communication of the Spirit of God, and he was just going to enter

• Mat. viii. 20.

upon the public execution of it. No sooner did the Spirit of God descend upon him, than he felt the effects of his presence and inspiration; for he was brought into a wilderness by a prophetic illumination of his mind, in a vision or spiritual rapture. In this state he continued forty days and forty nights together, a divine power, during this whole space of time, both supporting him without food, and protecting him from the dangers of the wilderness (such was the place where he now was in person as well as the scene of his vision). Hereby he had an opportunity of preparing* himself for his ministry by receiving new communications from God†, particularly a revelation of the Christian doctrine, which he was now *anointed by the Spirit to preach*‡. When the forty days were expired, the vision was closed by a prediction and prefiguration of the trials he was to combat, in the execution of that great office he was about to undertake. Now what could be more wisely adapted to his circumstances at this time than such

* Whether he had now an opportunity of exercising any extraordinary devotion, I will not undertake absolutely to determine, the text making express mention only of his fasting. In other cases, fasting was seldom separated from prayer, when persons were set apart to sacred offices, Acts xiii. 2, 3. ch. xiv. 23. compare Mat. xvii. 21. And why might not the revelations Christ now received from God, both leave room for, and even give occasion to, the exercises of his devotion?

† Thus Moses continued in the mount for the space of forty days without the use of food, receiving instructions from God, Exod. xxxiv. 27, 28. and making intercession for the Israelites, Deut. ix. 18.

‡ Luke iv. 18.

representations?

representations*? The view given him of the temptations of his succeeding ministry was highly proper to afford him an opportunity of arming himself with resolution to encounter them†; while the honours he had so lately received served to support him under the first shock of such discouraging prospects. And when could it be so fit to state the ends to which his miraculous power was to be applied, and the limits within which it was to be confined, as at the season when he was called forth to exert it? He had a power of performing all sorts of miracles at pleasure by a sovereign all-commanding

* In order to discern the propriety and necessity of this revelation, we are to recollect, that Christ's supernatural knowledge was communicated to him, as occasion required, by the Holy Ghost, under whose conduct he continually acted, while he lived upon earth. Luke iv. 18. *It is not unreasonable to suppose* (says Archbishop Tillotson, vol. ix. p. 273.) *that the divine wisdom, which dwelt in our Saviour, did communicate itself to his human soul according to his pleasure.—And if this be not admitted, how can we understand that passage concerning our Saviour, Luke ii. 52. that Jesus grew in wisdom and stature?* Grotius on Mark xiii. 32. speaks to the same effect, *Videtur mihi, ni meliora docear, hic locus non impie posse exponi hunc in modum, ut dicamus divinam sapientiam menti humanæ Christi effectus suos impressisse pro temporum ratione.* And Beza, on Luke ii. 52. observes, *Imò et ipsa θεοτεας plenitudo sese prout et quatenus ipsi libuit, humanitati assumtæ insinuavit.*

† Acts ix. 16. *I will shew him (Saul) how great things he must suffer for my sakes* Saul, like Christ, continued for some days fasting, and without having any communication with external objects; like Christ he also received visions and revelations from God, and particularly a revelation of his future sufferings, as a preparation for his public ministry, at the same time engaging in the exercises of devotion.

word ;

word; and by an unlimited exertion of this power he might have escaped every personal evil, conquered the most vicious prejudices of his enemies, and extended his fame and empire to the utmost limits of the world. But this, he is here shewn, would have been taking part with Satan, or a criminal misapplication of the power of miracles. This power he was not to use, to gratify any separate inclination, or promote any private interest of his own, but was to act on all occasions in perfect correspondence to the views, and in compliance with the will, of his Father*. Accordingly he never undertook a single miracle from his own motion alone*, without some previous address to God†, and without an immediate warrant and direction from him. And lastly, since at this time he was declared to be the Messiah, to whom the antient prophecies had promised a power and dominion, boundless both in extent and duration, which the Jews universally imagined would have been established in this world, upon the ruins of all the kingdoms of it; how necessary was it to explain the true nature of that dispensation or kingdom he was going to erect! The kingdom of the Messiah could not be of this world, but must be of a superior kind, since he was to rise to the possession of it by a contempt of earthly grandeur, by a superiority to every

* John v. 19, 20. 30.

† When going to raise Lazarus, Jesus said, *Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me ALWAYS.* John xi. 41, 42. Compare Mat. xxvi. 53.

thing which the world either admires or dreads. On the whole then it appears, that this vision contained a plan of Christ's future ministry ; since he passed through all the scenes which it represents, and constantly acted upon the maxims here established ; and that the argument drawn from the correspondence between this vision and the subsequent ministry of Christ, to shew that the former was a designed representation of the latter, is much confirmed by the season of this vision, which was just when the plan on which it was formed was going to be carried into execution. Having thus attempted to explain the true nature and intention * of Christ's temptation, I shall

SECTION V.

CLOSE this inquiry with the three following observations :

I. This account of the temptation of Christ obviates all the objections made to the common interpretation, and justifies the wisdom of God in this dispensation. It is not a series of external occurrences, some of them absurd and impossible, all of them useless and improbable, which is here related, but an internal vision ; and this is ascribed not to a diabolical

* The whole of what has been urged in this section, to shew the wise and benevolent design of this vision, confirms all the arguments which had been used to prove that God was the author of it, and supplies a new and unanswerable objection against the opinion of those who ascribe it to the agency of Satan.

cal but to a divine agency, agreeably to its instructive and beneficial design and tendency. The several scenes of which it is composed do each of them contain a real trial, such as occasioned a very bright display of the virtue and piety of our Redeemer, and yet he was not accessory to his own temptation, the mind being passive as to all the scenes which are presented to it in a vision. But upon the common hypothesis there was no temptation at all*; and if there had been any, his being exposed to it was the matter of his own choice†. If, besides the probationary nature, we take into our account the symbolical design of this vision, it was a proper preparation for that important office with which Christ was now invested. With what divine skill are the scenes of this vision framed, so as to answer both these purposes! What just ground then do they afford for censure?

Should it seem strange to any, that God should in this, and in so many other instances, reveal his will by emblems and symbolical actions; let it be remembered, that this was done in condescension to the capacities and ways of men. For in the eastern nations, and amongst the Jews in particular, it was usual to instruct by *actions* as well as *words*; by such actions as were easy signs of the particular instruction they were designed to impart, and served to convey it into the mind with greater force and stronger impression, than a more plain mode of information

* See above, Sect. I. p. 3—11.

† P. 12, &c.

would have done. And as actions may inspire and impress sentiments with equal advantage, whether they are really performed, or only represented to the imagination in a vision* ; so God made use of either, as he saw fit, communicating his mind sometimes by real actions, and at other times by sensible signs and images† impressed upon the imagination. And what signs or emblems could be more apt and significant than those which we have been examining, or better adapted to answer the end proposed by them?

If the account here given of this matter be indeed both just and rational, then it is obvious to reflect how cautious the adversaries of the Gospel should be in taking offence at any particular passages in it, which may have been injudiciously explained ; and how cautious Christians should be in giving offence,

* This will readily be allowed in the present case, and in all others, where nothing was aimed at beyond the instruction of the prophet. But the same method was used, when the instruction was designed to be conveyed by him to the people. The prophets in this case were required to relate their dreams or visions to the people, Jer. xxiii. 28, 29. Ezek. xi. 24, 25. and as their visions were of a parabolical nature, they served the same purposes as parables do. The relation of them was more lively and affecting than the bare naked instruction they contained would have been.*

† I am speaking here only of the general intention of this mode of information. For the symbols of a vision, when they referred to future events, like some of Christ's prophetic parables, were sometimes designed to *veil* the truth, rather than to illustrate it ; to insinuate gently and gradually what it was not proper to reveal clearly at the time the prophecy was delivered, which the event would afterwards sufficiently explain.

by hasty interpretations of it, lest many, taking occasion from the absurdity of the explication, should be tempted to reject the Gospel itself. The difficulties supposed to lie against the belief of the Christian religion are wholly of this sort, owing to certain passages in the sacred writings misunderstood and misapplied. Our Saviour complains of the Sadducees, that they rejected the doctrines of revelation, for want of having a just idea of them, and of the writings which contained them : *Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures**. They went upon the supposition that the prevailing and established doctrine of the Jewish church concerning the resurrection, and the sensual gratifications consequent upon it, was true ; and then considered the case of the seven brothers, who had all in their turns married the same woman, as an unanswerable objection against it. But there was no colour for their objection in any thing taught concerning the doctrine of a resurrection in the sacred writings ; and had they formed their judgment by these, the objection would never have been thought of. In like manner, in the present age, many form their notions of the Scriptures, not so much by the Scriptures themselves, as by received interpretations ; and because others put such a meaning upon them as is attended with unanswerable difficulties, they immediately reject them as incredible and indefensible, for want of knowing the Scriptures, and distinguishing

* Mat. xxii. 29.

between what is really contained in the divine word, and what is the offspring of human weakness and prejudice.

II. The account which has been given of the temptation in the wilderness, serves to exalt the character of Christ, and to confirm our faith in his divine mission.

What honour hereby accrues to the character of Christ, appears in some measure from the view we have taken of the several scenes placed before his mind, whether considered as respecting his present trial, or the future difficulties of his ministry. We have already surveyed him as struggling with all manner of hardships, and triumphing over them by a superior principle of piety and goodness. I would only observe farther, that the clear *foreknowledge* which Christ had from the beginning of all the trials and sufferings he was to undergo in the execution of his office, adds the highest lustre to his character. He was not ignorant what difficulties attended the work he was now undertaking, nor was he surprised into one suffering after another, without any previous warning; but, before he began his ministry, he foresaw all the evils with which he was to combat, the very worst to which human nature is liable. He knew he was to spend his life in want and contumely, and then to finish it upon the cross. And having a natural sense and dread of disgrace and suffering, the prospect of them made a very deep impression upon his mind. But the clearest foreknowledge, and the deepest im-

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pression of the difficulty and terror, of the task assigned him could not prevent him from undertaking it. Nothing could damp the ardour of his benevolence and piety. The resolution and firmness which those principles inspired were not to be shaken.

This vision, considered under the view of a prediction and prefiguration of the trials of Christ's future ministry, prevents all suspicion of imposture, and establishes our faith in his divine mission. How forward soever enterprising and profligate men may be, to make false pretences to a divine commission and revelation, in order to serve the ends of worldly policy and ambition, yet no impostor would ever make pretences of this kind, if he previously knew that he should meet with nothing but sufferings and death as his reward. We find the true prophets of God, notwithstanding their immediate call from heaven, entering upon their office with great reluctance*, on account of the difficulty and danger attending the faithful discharge of it. For of all employments none is so hazardous as that of bearing testimony against popular and long established prejudice and vice, which are more easily exasperated than extirpated, and always aim at the ruin of those who attempt a reformation. With regard to our Saviour, he had a distinct and certain foreknowledge of that long train of sufferings which he was to pass through, and which were to be closed by a violent and ignominious

* Exod. iv. 13. Jerem. i. 6, 7, 8.

death upon the cross. And his peculiar character increased the bitterness of these evils, and rendered the view of them more formidable than they would otherwise have been. He challenged a character of transcendent dignity, and a peculiar relation to the Father, as his only begotten and beloved Son, and yet was to live in a state of abasement and affliction, like the meanest and most miserable of the children of men. He was invested with authority over all the laws of nature, which he displayed continually for the conviction and benefit of mankind; but it was never to be employed for his own personal advantage; no, not in protecting himself from indigence, or injury, or death. He was the great Messiah, the glorious prince and redeemer promised by God; and yet he was to renounce the offer of worldly empire, which was accounted by the whole Jewish nation to be essential to that character. Nay, those sufferings which do so much credit to other prophets, greatly injured his; because they were judged inconsistent with his claims, and the predictions concerning him. His very death, which is the strongest pledge that human faith can give, instead of removing, fixed upon him the charge of imposture*, with a people who held it as a first principle,

* Though the common people were so eager to follow Jesus during the course of his ministry, from the hope of his assuming a temporal kingdom, John vi. 14, 15. and though they received him with hosannas when he made his last public entrance into Jerusalem, from the same hope, Mat. xxi. 8, 9. yet when they found that his enemies had seized, tried, and condemned him to death, without his inter-

posing

principle, that the *Messiah was to abide for ever* *. How impossible then is it, to entertain a suspicion concerning the truth and sincerity of the great author and founder of our religion ! From what motives of interest could he assume the character of the Messiah, when he gave notice beforehand that sufferings and death were all the reward he expected upon earth ? Did those impostors who sprang up in Judea about the time of Christ, act on such principles ? Just the contrary. Or did any deceiver ever make his undergoing

posing for his own deliverance, and that he had declared in terms, that his kingdom was not of this world, and that he had no intention of rescuing himself out of the hands of his enemies, John xviii. 36. they clamorously demanded his crucifixion, and persisted in their demand, notwithstanding the utmost endeavours of Pilate to save him. If there were any who did not yet despair of his being the Messiah, they might join in the cry against Jesus the more readily, in order to force him to an open declaration, and miraculous vindication of his character. But when they saw him actually nailed to the cross, the common people could not preserve their opinion of him any longer ; they were as forward as their malicious rulers, to revile Jesus as a deceiver and impostor, and they urge his sufferings as a proof that he was so. The faith even of his own disciples was, in a great measure, now lost in despair, for they no longer considered him as *the person who should redeem Israel*, Luke xxiv. 21. The disappointment of the common expectation of a temporal empire, was not only a cruel mortification of the pride and ambition of the Jewish people, but was considered as a demonstration of the falsehood of Christ's pretension to the character of the Messiah. In this latter view (in which it is not so commonly attended to), yet more than in the former, the utter disappointment of the Jewish people, when they saw Christ in the hands of his enemies, accounts for the change of their behaviour towards him at that season.

* John xii. 34.

a violent and public death by the hands of his enemies, the foundation of his credit? and would Christ, if he had not been a truly divine messenger, have acted thus amongst those who considered his crucifixion as an unanswerable confutation of his claims? There is not the least room to surmise that he died from a principle of vain-glory, since his death exposed him to universal infamy; and, in his peculiar circumstances, must have blasted his reputation for ever, if God had not vindicated it by raising him from the dead. This consideration, while it heightens our admiration of the heroic fortitude and piety of the Redeemer, in submitting to the infamy of a public execution, (a trial singularly severe in the present case!) serves also fully to convince us, that Christ undertook the office of the Messiah, from no motive of this world, but from a firm assurance of a resurrection to a state of transcendent glory in another, according to his own repeated predictions. And could any thing but the strongest evidence of his being raised from the dead, and exalted to heaven, efface the impression of his sufferings upon earth, and engage men to adore as their Saviour and Messiah, the very person whom, with so full a bent of their understandings* and hearts, they had crucified as a blasphemer and impostor?

III. This account of Christ's temptation furnishes

* See p. 121, note *, and Luke xxiii. 34. 1 Cor. ii. 8. Acts iii. 17. ch. xiii. 27.

ample instruction and consolation to his disciples, under those manifold and great temptations they may be called to encounter. This being a point which has been often and well urged by many practical writers, will be only briefly touched upon. But it may be proper to observe, that those writers, by abating the force, nay destroying the reality, of Christ's temptation*, rob us of all the practical improvement of it, and remove the very foundation upon which the comfort and edification of Christians should be built; whereas by considering it as a prophetic vision, in which things are represented to the mind in the same manner as if they really happened, and that representation answers all the ends of an actual performance, we maintain the reality and strength of Christ's temptation†, and consequently secure all the advantages which are, without reason, ascribed to the common hypothesis, and do properly belong to this interpretation only.

We learn from this history that human nature, even in its most perfect state, and in all circumstances, is incident to temptations; that a pre-eminence of character, station, and endowments, is attended with proportionable difficulties and dangers; that these trials are no signs of God's displeasure, but the ap-

* As was shewn above, Sect. I. p. 2, &c.

† Besides, the very prospect which Christ now had of the difficulties of his future ministry, constituted a great trial, as was observed above, Sect. IV. p. 90.

pointments of his wisdom and goodness for our benefit, the means of brightening our virtues, and of rendering our future crown more illustrious ; that the best method of resisting and vanquishing temptations is by the assistance of the Spirit, by the exercise of purity and devotion, by arguments drawn from the word of God, and by yielding immediately to the first and unbiassed dictates of conscience, without deliberating a moment in matters of plain duty, the least deliberation in such cases being a sign that the heart is already swerved from virtue ; and that Christians have sufficient encouragement, from their tenderness and sympathy which Christ acquired by his sufferings*, to expect all necessary succour under their various infirmities and trials. We likewise learn from this part of the evangelical history, that when we are set apart to such offices as bring along with them an obligation to duties of peculiar difficulty and importance, and require an extraordinary measure of divine assistance,—as we ought to consider well the great weight of the work we are going to engage in, take a full view of the difficulties we shall meet with in the prosecution of it, and arm ourselves with resolution to undergo them,—so we should, by fasting and the exercises of an extraordinary devotion†, engage the divine presence with us in our arduous undertaking. And lastly, we learn what is the

* Heb. ii. 14. ch. iv. 15.

† See above, p. 112, note *.

temptation which prevails with the pretended vicar of Christ to corrupt the true religion; and this is the desire of the kingdoms of this world, and the glory of them, of which the pope challenges the disposal, and with the offer of which he allures men to fall down and pay him divine honours. And, alas! in all communions, how many are there who account that the best religion which most effectually advances their secular interest! How many are tempted to deny or conceal the truth, or to espouse falsehood by a fondness for power, wealth, and popular applause, or a dread of poverty, reproach, and persecution! whereas no man is qualified to preach the gospel, or indeed to profess it, who is not fortified against the temptations of ease and affluence, of pride and ambition, and who is not willing to take up his cross and follow Christ. A hard saying to flesh and blood! But the captain of our salvation has given us an example, and shewn us how to conquer. He bids us be courageous in our combat, because he has overcome the world*, and will not fail therefore both to assist us in gaining the victory, and to reward our steadfastness with a crown of glory that fadeth not away. Let us contemplate him as the pattern, not only of our duty but of our recompense. He renounced the kingdoms of this world, but has acquired an infinitely more noble and extensive empire, and is

* John xvi. 33.

constituted the lord and judge of angels and of men. Behold him seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high, on purpose that he may advance his faithful followers to proportionate degrees of celestial honour. We cannot faint under difficulties while we listen to the sound of his animating voice, addressing us from heaven, *To him that overcometh, will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne**.

• Rev. iii. 21

APPENDIX I.

CONTAINING

Some farther Observations upon the subject of the preceding Inquiry, and an Answer to Objections.

FULLY sensible as I was from the beginning, that the argument of the Inquiry was repugnant to the strongest prepossessions of every denomination of Christians, yet a belief of its importance induced me to submit it to public examination; not without some hope, that, in case it was well supported, it might gradually make its way into candid and ingenuous minds; or that, if it was ill-grounded, some friend to truth would correct my mistakes, and place the subject in a juster light. The success which the Inquiry has met with, has exceeded my expectations. It is indebted to many for their candour*; and to some who are universally ranked amongst the most capable judges of the subject for their approbation. This has encouraged me to review it, and to attempt to remove the objections which have been urged against it, still wishing it may undergo an

* The learned and judicious Spanheim, at the same time that he pleads for the literal interpretation, recommends candour towards those who rejected it, from these two considerations: Quum nec res fidei sit, nec Scriptura id *αυτολεξι* definiat. *Dubia Evangel. dub.* 55. p. 247. See also p. 244.

impartial scrutiny by the public, whatever be the issue. I have used great diligence in collecting the objections to which it was thought to be liable. And though most of them are in some degree either obviated or answered in the first and second editions of the Inquiry, and, I hope, more fully in the present*; nevertheless, it may not be improper to enter on a farther discussion of some of the most material ones, as it may lead us to place the answers in a different light, and to make some farther observations on the general subject.

I.

But first of all I would take notice that the public has been referred to Dr. Clarke's discourses on Christ's temptation†, as containing a satisfactory solution of the difficulties attending the literal interpretation. It will therefore be necessary to examine those discourses; nor will it be improper to subjoin a few observations on what Dr. Benson or others have written more lately upon the same subject, and with the same view.

With regard to Dr. Clarke, I readily allow, that such were the abilities and learning of that celebrated writer, as eminently to qualify him for the task he undertook. And had the literal interpretation of this

* The notes added to the second and third editions would have been published separately, if they had not been so numerous as to make it necessary to insert them in the Inquiry, for the ease and convenience of the reader.

† They are the 93d and 94th Sermons, vol. i. p. 585. 591. fol. ed.

passage of Scripture been capable of a just defence, it would have been successfully defended by this accomplished scholar and critic. If he has not succeeded, we may fairly presume that the fault was in the cause rather than the advocate.

The doctor begins with observing*, *that the history of our Saviour's temptation is a portion of Scripture, in which there are several difficulties that deserve particular explication* ; and then sets himself to explain the following ones: 1st, *Why our Saviour, whom the Scripture elsewhere declares to have been tempted in all points, as we are, only without sin, is yet by the evangelists recorded as having been tempted only at this particular time.* 2dly, *Why our Saviour continued so long in the solitary retirement of a desert place, and why he fasted through all that space of forty days.* 3dly, *Why our Saviour, who had power over unclean spirits, and could cast out devils at his pleasure, was yet pleased to submit himself and condescend so far as to be tempted at all by the enemy.* 4thly, *Why the tempter would at all assault our Lord, or what advantage he could possibly hope to gain over him.* 5thly, and lastly, *Since we read no more in the Gospels of Christ's being tempted after this, how and in what sense it is said by St. Luke, at the conclusion of this history of our Lord's temptation, that the tempter departed from him only for a season.*

These are all the difficulties which Dr. Clarke saw fit to propose and examine. Whether some of them

* P. 585.

do really belong to the subject, and whether the rest are fully solved, I shall leave to others to determine. Let us suppose (what many however would very unwillingly grant) that he has removed all the objections here enumerated; there are many others which he has suffered to pass unnoticed. He did not observe, or has passed over in silence, most, if not all those which are urged in the Inquiry*. Now to *overlook* a difficulty, and to *remove* it, are things widely different. It may be said, perhaps, that those objections which to others seem very considerable, appeared to him too trifling to be considered. And I acknowledge candour would oblige us to presume this to be the case, with regard to a writer of such superior abilities, and such unquestionable freedom and fairness as Dr. Clarke, if there were not certain proof of the contrary. It appears from his other writings, that he judged one of the objections to the history of Christ's temptation, which he has omitted in his sermons, and which is urged in the Inquiry, to be *unanswerable*; I mean that drawn from the *devil's shewing Christ all the kingdoms of the world*, which he explains by saying, *he made him a representation of them*†. And

* Indeed the 4th difficulty which the doctor undertakes to explain, corresponds in some degree with the first objection in the Inquiry, p. 2, &c. But the doctor entirely overlooks the main circumstance, the *absurdity* of the devil's assaulting Christ *in an open and visible manner*. This circumstance is likewise dropt, when he returns an answer to his third difficulty, by misapplying Heb. ii. 14—18. ch. iv. 15. See the Inquiry, p. 12—18.

† Paraphrase on Mat. iv. 8. and Luke iv. 5.

thus

thus this justly celebrated writer, like most other writers of inferior note upon the subject of Christ's temptation, though he undertook to vindicate the literal interpretation, found himself under a necessity, in one instance at least, of receding from it.

The world is just favoured with a work of the late reverend and learned Dr. Benson*, and it may reasonably be expected, that some notice should be taken of what such a writer has advanced upon the subject under consideration, especially as he has treated it in an elaborate manner†. He rejects the supposition of its being a dream or vision‡, and affirms, that *the evangelists seem, plainly, to have represented all these things as historical facts*§; adding, *that he was inclined to understand this part of the four Gospels, as literal, historical truth; or an account of what actually happened*§. We find, however, that at first setting out he began to feel some *doubt* upon his mind; for thus he expresses himself with regard to one circumstance of the history, viz. the manner of Satan's appearance to Christ: *He seems to have appeared unto Jesus, in a visible manner, at least in VISION*||. As the doctor proceeds, new difficulties come in his way, and he not only doubts, but *denies* the truth, and even the possibility, of the literal interpretation. *It is impossible* (says he) *from thence* (that is, *from the top of the highest mountain upon earth,*) *to see the length, breadth, and full extent of*

* *The History of the Life of Christ.*

† Chapter ii.

‡ P. 36.

§ P. 37.

|| P. 32.

any one large kingdom, much less all the kingdoms of this world, and all the splendour and glory of them*. And notwithstanding his own inclination to understand all the temptations as literal historical truth, he honestly confesses, *As to this part of the representation, there seems to be a necessity of having recourse to vision; or rather, to a fictitious scene, worked up by diabolical power and art*†. Nay, the doctor lays down a rule of interpretation which (in my apprehension) destroys all that he has advanced in favour of the common hypothesis. His rule is this, viz. *We should look upon every thing to be literally, or historically true; but where there are some circumstances to determine us to interpret a passage in a figurative manner, and especially where the literal sense would lead us into manifest absurdity*‡. Is it not absurd, that is, contrary to reason and experience, to suppose that the devil can *hurry men through the air*§, or so much as *appear to them in a visible manner*||? Were it not for the prejudices of education, we should rank these things amongst the most glaring repugnancies to the constitution of the universe, and as a very gross (though undesigned) impeachment of the wisdom of its sovereign author and lord.

I will take notice of one thing more in the doctor's performance, because he seems to lay much stress upon it, though it has been already considered in the Inquiry. I refer to the general reason he assigns for

• P. 39. † P. 38. ‡ P. 39. § P. 35. || P. 32.

adhering to the literal interpretation, *To say the truth, our Lord's resisting these temptations, in vision only, would not, in my opinion, have been so much to his honour, so glorious an example to his disciples, nor such an illustrious evidence that he was superior to all the temptations of the devil**. Soon after he adds, *It seems to me altogether worthy of our Lord's high and sacred character, to manifest that the devil could not, by any temptation whatever, prevail with Jesus to commit the least sin; even when the devil was permitted to take his own way, place him in what situation he pleased, and attack him, in such manner, and in such circumstances, as might give his temptations all possible weight or force.* Whether, supposing the scenes to be visionary, they constituted any proper trial, is a point considered elsewhere†: here let us examine, whether, upon the doctor's hypothesis, the temptations of the devil had *all possible force*, or any force at all. In explaining the first temptation he tells us, *our Lord was not ignorant who the person was that accosted him*‡. Now if Christ knew Satan from the beginning, this circumstance, our most candid adversaries allow, would diminish the force of all his temptations. With respect to the third and last temptation in particular, Dr. Benson calls it *the greatest of them all*§; and yet, according to this learned writer, Christ not only knew who made him the offer of all kingdoms of the world, but also that

* P. 37.

‡ Dr. Benson's *Life of Christ*, p. 34.

† Appendix I. No. V.

§ P. 38.

the devil's claim to the disposal of them was *arrogant, usurped, AND ENTIRELY GROUNDLESS AND VAIN**. Now, even to the warmest advocate for the literal scheme, I might venture to appeal whether there was the *least* force in such a temptation. The doctor admits that Christ knew the devil's claim to the disposal of the world, and consequently the devil's promise of it to him, to be *entirely groundless*, and therefore that it could not in any degree be fulfilled. And yet, as if Christ had known the very contrary to be true, the doctor exclaims, *to be tempted, at once, with all the kingdoms of the world, and all the glory of them! must have been such a temptation, as it can hardly enter into the heart of man to conceive the prodigious and almost irresistible force thereof†*. I own I cannot discern the tempting force, much less the *prodigious and almost irresistible* force, of an offer of *nothing*; or, which is the same, of something which the person who makes it is known to be utterly unable to make good. The meanest slave of vice would turn from such a temptation with scorn. Was it then by resisting assaults of this nature, that Christ was to manifest his superiority to all the temptations of the devil, to advance his own honour, and to set a glorious example to his disciples? And was it for the sake of such triumphs that the laws of nature were now suspended, and all those wonderful scenes which the doctor so affectingly describes, *presented before our Lord's eyes*, by a series of miracles?

* P. 41.

† P. 40.

Besides Dr. Benson, Dr. Macknight has lately appeared in defence of the history of Christ's temptation, in the literal sense of it. The reasonings of this gentleman in his Commentary upon it, I have carefully examined in my observations on the several passages, as they occurred in the Inquiry. And because nothing ought to pass unregarded, which is advanced by this able and judicious writer, I would inform the reader, that in his *Truth of the Gospel History**, after taking notice of my Inquiry, he affirms, "That the literal sense of the history of the temptation is agreeable to the representation which the Scriptures have given us of the agency of evil spirits." On this passage I would make the following remarks: 1. The Inquiry does not controvert the agency of the devil and other evil spirits in tempting mankind†. 2. Nor does the allowing the temptation of Christ in the wilderness to be a vision, contradict the common doctrine concerning the agency of evil spirits in proposing temptations. On the contrary, the vision is framed agreeably to this hypothesis, the image of the great tempter being used as the symbol and emblem of temptation†. 3. In order to subvert the principles laid down in the Inquiry, it is necessary to establish, not some agency of Satan in tempting mankind in the general course of things, but the correspondence of such a general agency to the literal sense of this history, which represents him as

* P. 173, in the note.

† See the Inquiry, p. 93, note *.

appearing to Christ in a visible form, conversing with him openly, and conveying or accompanying him from place to place in a sensible manner. But this is a point our learned author has not attempted to prove.

Let others judge of the force of the objections against the literal interpretation; with respect to myself, having in vain sought for a satisfactory solution of them from those most capable of affording it, I still find myself under a necessity of looking out for some different explication. And none appearing to me so probable as that suggested in the Inquiry, I will attempt to clear it from objections.

II.

It has been objected, "That if this part of the Gospel be only the history of a vision, the same may be affirmed concerning every other part of the Gospel. The whole account of our Saviour's *miracles in particular*, may be nothing more than a narrative of so many visions."

This objection manifestly proceeds upon this false principle, viz. "That there is just the same reason for affirming the miracles of Christ to be the history of what was transacted only in vision, as there is to affirm the same concerning his temptations in the wilderness." If there be a just distinction in the two cases, the objection falls to the ground. It has been shewn, that neither the *nature* of Christ's temptations did admit, nor the *end* proposed by them require, an outward transaction; and also that the historians have clearly *intimated* by many *circumstances* of the relation,

tion, that they were visionary representations, and that they have even *positively asserted* them to be such. But this reasoning does not affect the miracles of the Gospel; for they are all, in their own *nature*, possible to the power to which they are ascribed; the *end* proposed by them, the conviction of mankind, required an actual exhibition and performance; all the *circumstances* attending them, the reasonings from them, and the effects they produced, farther shew that they were real facts; and the evangelists have *affirmed* that they were performed openly, and in the most public manner. Thus all the arguments used to prove Christ's temptations to have been visions, are so far from warranting the same conclusion with regard to his miracles, that they demonstrate the contrary, and prove them to be real facts.

I most readily allow, that the literal sense of all authors ought never to be departed from without some just reason or necessity, and that very great injury has been done to the Scripture, by making those parts of it symbolical, emblematical, or allegorical, which were designed to be understood literally. This is setting aside the genuine word of God, and substituting in the room of it the infinitely various fictions of the human imagination. With this fault the ancient writers* of the Christian church have been

* The *Christian Fathers*, in allegorizing the Scripture, seem to have copied (as Philo and other learned Jews before them had done) the method of the Greeks in explaining their mysteries. See Le Clerc's *Hist. Eccles.* p. 24. and compare Dr. Lightfoot's works, vol. i. p. 373.

frequently and justly charged. Origen, and (in their younger years) Jerome and Augustin, though they did not absolutely reject the literal sense of Scripture, yet led men to neglect and undervalue it as low and trivial, by the preference they gave to mystical interpretations. But may we not be guilty of equal absurdity, and do as great prejudice to the Scripture, by *adhering* to the letter unreasonably, as by unreasonably *departing* from it? When our Saviour speaks of *eating his flesh and drinking his blood*, are we to understand him literally, as the Jews did? He himself has told us, that his *words are spirit*, to be interpreted figuratively or spiritually. On other occasions he uses the like style, and calls himself *the door of the sheep, the bread which came down from heaven, and the true vine*; leaving it to common sense to explain his meaning. In a word, there is no book contains a greater variety of matter than the Bible. And though many have pleaded, “that the visions related in Scripture occur only in the *prophetical* books, not in the *historical* ;” yet it appears from the instances cited in the Inquiry*, (to which many more might be added,) that even the *historical* books relate parables, fables†, revelations, or mental illuminations and visions,

* P. 29, 30, 31, 32, 33. 43. 83. &c. See also 1 Kings xxii. 19—22. cited below, No. III. note *.

† *The trees went forth on a time to anoint a king over them, and they said, &c.* Judges ix. 8—15. Now to borrow the reasoning so often employed against the Inquiry, “*We have as little reason to affirm, from the*

visions, as well as plain doctrines and outward events. And the *prophetical* books, not excepting Ezekiel, and the Revelation of St. John, have some intermixture of real facts with the history of visions and revelations. Now all these things ought to be understood according to their respective natures. By a diligent and impartial use of our understandings, we may easily distinguish between things that differ. The relation itself, or the declaration of the historian, if attended to, will preserve us from mistake. To distinguish properly is the business of the critic : and to plead (as *all* interpreters do occasionally) for some figurative modes of speech, is not to convert every thing into figure and allegory, unless the reasonings made use of are as applicable to the whole as to particular parts of Scripture.

the style of the sacred writer, and the manner of his expressions, that this is a parable, as we have to affirm that the miracles of Christ were mere parables: both are equally described as real facts, without any the least *intimation* of the contrary." But who does not see the absurdity of this reasoning? Experience informs us that trees neither walk nor speak. And the same experience as certainly informs us, that the devil does never appear visibly to mankind, never converses with them in an open manner, neither transports them through the air, nor accompanies or conducts them from the country to the city, or from the city to the country. In both cases, therefore, the nature of the relation points out the necessity of a figurative interpretation. It is objected, " that we are ignorant of the powers of superior beings, and know nothing of the *other* world." But we are not unacquainted with the laws and orders of *this* world; we know by experience that they never are violated, and by reason are assured they never can be violated, but by the great ruler of the world.

III. It

III.

It has been objected, "That supposing the temptation of Christ to be a vision, God could not be the author of it; inasmuch as it contains such representations of the power of the devil in making Christ an offer of the world, as are not agreeable to his real nature."

This objection, if it proves any thing, would prove too much: for it affects the credit of all visions, which are mere *deceptions*, having no existence out of the mind of the prophet*. Besides, it is of no importance

* This is the case, even when the images of a vision are types or representative figures of real objects, and give a just picture of them, as when *Saul saw Ananias in vision*, Acts ix. 12. The appearance or representation was fictitious and delusive, though an object perfectly correspondent to it existed in nature. But very frequently the visionary representation has no corresponding object in nature; or, if it bears a resemblance to real beings in some respects, it differs from them in others, and is not framed so much with a view to truth and nature, as to constitute a proper symbol, emblem, or hieroglyphic of what it is designed to signify and represent: witness the *cherubim* of Ezekiel, chap. i. his emblematical *temple*, chap. xl. (see Inquiry, Sect. III. p. 59. note †.) *the lamb having seven horns, and seven eyes*, Rev. v. 6. and the various symbols and emblems of the divinity, and those in particular which constituted the vision of Micaiah, 1 Kings xxii. 19—22. Here the prophet says, *I saw the Lord sitting upon his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him, on his right-hand and on his left*; though God, we are certain, is without bodily parts, spiritual, invisible, and omnipresent. He then tells us, that God advised with the heavenly host what measures to take, and some recommended one thing, some another, till after much deliberation one of them hit upon an expedient, such as after examination was approved by the Deity, which was that of being a lying spirit in the mouth

ance whether the images of a vision are borrowed from nature, or whether they vary from it wholly or in part ; they are used only as symbols and emblems of other things ; and they may answer this end equally on any of these suppositions. For their propriety does not consist in their being just pictures of real objects, but in their fitness to represent the instruction they contain. In the case before us, the appearance of the tempter to Christ, and his making him the promise of universal empire, was a symbol and emblem, not of the power of the tempter himself, but of the actual offer of grandeur and empire, with which Christ was to be tempted in the course of his ministry. And it was necessary that the promise of the world in vision should appear real ; since otherwise it could not have truly represented the temptation he was actually exposed to, of securing the empire of

mouth of Ahab's prophets. Now if you ask, Has the devil the disposal of the world ? and, if he has not, could he be represented in a divine vision as actually having it ? I also would inquire with the prophet of God, *Who has directed the spirit of the Lord ?—With whom took he counsel ?* Or when could he stand in need of advice ? When did he authorise falsehood and lyes ? The answer in both cases is the same : neither are to be understood literally, or as a history of facts, but as visions or parabolical representations ; and though the representations are mere fictions, they convey instruction as truly and properly as if they were exact copies of outward objects. Micaiah's vision was a prediction and figurative representation of God's providence in ordering matters so as that Ahab, by giving credit to his own false prophets, who flattered his pride and prejudices, should fall at Ramoth Gilead ; just as the tempter's promise was a prophecy and prefiguration of the empire and grandeur with which Christ was afterwards to be tempted.

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the world by a different application of his miraculous powers from that which he was appointed to make of them. So that the whole of the objection amounts to this (which equally affects many other visions in Scripture), that the image has no corresponding object in nature, or no exact external archetype (a point which we have no inclination to dispute); while it must be allowed to have been a proper symbol of what it was designed to represent.

If we deny that any impression can be made upon the mind by God, but such as is conformable to the real nature of external objects, we condemn the constitution of the world around us. Without entering into the philosophy either of Locke or Berkeley, it is certain that the objects around us (those outward sensible signs by which God is continually speaking to mankind) raise in us ideas and sensations very different from the real natures of the things themselves. We ascribe sensible qualities to objects, such as heat, coldness, and the like, though they exist not in the objects, but are solely perceptions in the mind. How various are the aspects of objects, according to their different distances, the nature of the medium, and the disposition of the organ! Nor are we deceived only by those false representations which the senses make of objects to the mind, but we even mistake those images and representations for the very objects themselves, and, in so doing, follow an universal and powerful instinct of nature. Nevertheless it is certain, that though external objects may have a
real

real and absolute existence, the mind has no immediate intercourse with them, but only (through the inlets of the senses) receives the images, copies, and representations of them. The objection, therefore, here made to *supernatural* vision, equally affects *natural* vision. If the latter be a dispensation not unworthy the God of truth, neither can the former. It is not, perhaps, the intention of Providence, by any impressions it makes upon our minds, to lead us into the knowledge of the abstract natures of things, but (more immediately and principally) to convey some useful instruction, such as may serve for the direction of our conduct, to admonish us what to avoid and what to pursue. In the case before us at least, it is certain that the representation of Satan in vision was not designed to give Christ any new information concerning the nature of Satan, because here he is only an emblem and symbol of temptation.

If you still plead, "That we may correct the errors of sense by the reflections of reason, which enables us to judge of things, not merely as they appear at first, but as they really are," the same answer is more fully applicable to the case in question; reason always enabling the prophet, when the vision is ended, to pass a true judgment concerning the nature of its representations.

IV.

It is asserted in the Inquiry, that the proper intention of this vision was, to predict to our Saviour his future trials; that the several scenes were distinct prophecies

prophecies and symbols of the different temptations which were to occur in the course of his ministry, and proper premonitions against them. This is argued* from two considerations; the general nature of visions as symbolical and prophetic, and the perfect correspondence between the signs in this vision, and the things they signified and represented.

Now, though the instances† produced in the Inquiry may be sufficient to prove that visions in general were of an emblematical nature, yet this being a point of very great importance to the right understanding of this and many other passages of Scripture, I will confirm it by some farther examples. That God is a spiritual incorporeal being, is equally the doctrine of reason and revelation. And therefore, when we read so often in the prophets that they *saw the Lord sitting upon his throne‡*, we may be certain that they had only a mental representation of some *symbol or emblem* of the majesty of God§. Jacob's ladder

* Inquiry, p. 88—90.

† P. 30, note *, p. 86, 87, 93, note *, and p. 117.

‡ 1 Kings xxii. 19. Is. vi. 1. Dan. vii. 9, 10. Acts vii. 55. Rev. iv. 2.

§ Nevertheless, the antients, taking every thing spoken of God in the Scriptures in a *literal* sense, attributed to him *the figure of a man*, and maintained that he was the *object of bodily sight*. And such was the zeal with which this doctrine was maintained, that the denial of it was branded with impiety, and put men in danger of their lives. Socrat. Hist. Eccles. l. 6. c. 7. I take notice of this here, not only as it is a striking instance of an absurd adherence to the letter of Scripture, but also as it may serve to shew how little regard in some cases is due to the opinions of the antients, and that it ought to create no

ladder standing upon the earth, and reaching to heaven, with the angels ascending and descending on it, was the hieroglyphic of God's particular providence, or of his readiness to interpose in an extraordinary manner in favour of the patriarch*. In like manner, the persons and things which St. John saw in vision, do all stand for other persons and things, and had themselves no existence but in the *imagination* of the prophet (the Spirit of God presenting before it all those appearances and scenes which he describes, which are therefore justly called a *revelation*†). The glorious personage in a human form, at whose feet he fell down as dead‡, was not Christ himself, but a symbolical representation of him; and such also was *the lamb in the midst of the throne*§. *The four living creatures, and the four-and-twenty elders*||, were not real beings, but were emblems of such things as did really exist in nature. Sometimes an express declaration is made, what the objects of the vision represent: *The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest, are, i. e. signify and represent, the seven*

prejudice against the explication here given of Christ's temptation, that it is contrary to theirs. They who could so far dishonour the omnipresent Deity, as to attribute to him a visible and human form, would hardly scruple to ascribe something of this kind to the devil.

* Gen. xxviii. 12, 13. compare John i. 51.

† Rev. i. 1.

§ Rev. v. 6.

‡ Ch. i. 13—16.

|| Ch. iv. 4. 6.

*churches**. At other times the vision was not explained, and people were at a loss to find out its meaning and reference, as appears by that complaint of the prophet, *Ah Lord God, they say of me, Doth he not speak parables*†? It can never be sufficiently lamented, that Christian divines, notwithstanding the clearest evidence that visions were merely mental illuminations, and their several scenes figurative and symbolical, do frequently speak of those scenes as describing real objects and beings, such as have an existence in nature. *The throne of God in heaven, the worship paid him there by the elders*‡, and *the new Jerusalem*§, which St. John saw and described, are too often explained in such a manner as would lead one to suppose, that they contained, in part at least, a description of the true heaven, and the real worship and felicity of the righteous in it. But if these visions of St. John do indeed refer to heaven at all, they are at most only symbols and emblems of it, and as such perfectly distinct from that place or state itself||. Other undoubted examples of the symboli-
cal

* Ch. i. 20. See Dan. viii. 20, 21.

‡ Rev. iv.

† Ezek. xx. 49.

§ Ch. xxi, xxii.

|| The Mohammedans, when reproached with the low and sensual descriptions of paradise, which occur almost in every page of their Koran, retort these passages out of the *Revelation* of St. John, and plead their having the same right to have recourse to figure and allegory as those Christians who do not understand the forecited passages in a literal sense. But here lies the difference: all the representations in the *Revelation* of St. John are declared to be *visionary*, and therefore were designed to be understood as figurative and
symbolical,

cal nature of visionary representations and miraculous appearances may be found in the passages referred to below*. I shall only add, that when God declares by the prophet, *I have multiplied visions, and used similitudes*†, this language plainly implies, that the objects of vision were always designed as resemblances and apt representations of other things.

V.

The most plausible objections against the Inquiry are levelled against those passages which assert that Christ's vision contained a present trial. It is alleged, "That the same considerations which diminish or destroy the force of Christ's temptation upon the common hypothesis, equally affect its force upon mine." If this allegation be just, neither of these hypotheses can be true, since it serves equally for the confutation of both. We hope however to shew that the allegation has no sufficient foundation to support it. In order to the right understanding of this subject it will be necessary to observe,

1. That the Inquiry‡ asserts this vision to be directly and properly intended as *a prediction and*

symbolical, and, unless they are so understood, cannot be reconciled with other plain passages of the New Testament: but the Mohammedan representations of Paradise objected to by Christians *are not declared* to be visionary and symbolical, and even have no consistent meaning unless they are literally understood.

* Gen. xv. 17. ch. xxxvii. 7. 9. Exod. iii. 2. Jer. i. 11. 13. Ezek. xxxvii. 1. Zech. i. 7, &c. ch. iv. 2—11. ch. v. 1—5. Acts xvi. 9, 10.

† Hosea xii. 10.

‡ P. 88.

symbol

symbol of Christ's future temptations. And against this view of it no material objection has ever been urged. So that even were we to grant that this vision was not *probationary*, this would not affect its proper use and intention as *prophetical* and *premonitory*. Though this observation was made in the first edition of the Inquiry*, it was necessary to repeat it here, because it seems not to have been attended to by those who make the objection we are considering.

2. It is evident that this vision bore the *form* of a present trial. To the view and apprehension of Christ at the time, it contained certain alluring proposals made to him by the devil, in order to solicit him to evil. And on this account it is, that the history relates them as real temptations, and tells us, that Christ was carried into the wilderness, *that he might be tempted of the devil.* This expression describes the *nature of the vision or representation*; for the history of a vision always corresponds to the views of the prophet. Christ likewise rejects the several proposals here made to him, as so many temptations of the devil.

3. This vision, however, could not be designed to *tempt Christ*, if we thereby mean *soliciting or seducing* him into sin, because it had a divine author. And if we examine the nature of the vision itself, we must immediately perceive that it could not be intended to seduce him into sin; for the several scenes

* P. 63, note *g*, 1st edit. and p. 106, 3d edit. note *k*.

of it were so framed, as to guard or warn a good mind from yielding to any of the proposals it contained. To appearance these proposals were made by the devil in person, which was designed to awaken an immediate resistance, and was a proper *monition* against a compliance.

4. Nevertheless, this vision might (I apprehend) answer the end of a present trial; that is, it might serve to shew how Christ was disposed to act, or to *discover* and *display* his virtue, which is a very common meaning of the word temptation or trial in Scripture*, and is the sense in which we use it here, when we call Christ's vision a present trial. The several proposals now made to Christ, viz. the satisfying his present hunger by a miracle, the opening his divine commission at the temple of Jerusalem by a seeming descent from heaven, and his ascending the throne of his father David; these proposals were in *themselves* so enticing, that nothing but the considering them as *sinful*, or as *temptations of Satan*, could dispose the most consummate virtue to reject them. Christ's virtue therefore was evidenced and exercised by his rejection of these proposals. His ready answers sufficiently shew upon what principles of piety he acted; and that he considered the proposals, however alluring, as temptations which were to be resisted. And he did accordingly resist them. These circumstances rendered this vision, though

* See above, p. 90—92.

prophetic and monitory in its frame and intention, yet in some degree probationary likewise. At the time, Christ considered it as a trial, agreeably to the form it bore. When the vision was ended, he would naturally regard it as an emblem of his future conflicts, on account of the prophetic design of visionary representations. In this view also it served to try the steadfastness of his piety and virtue, his readiness and resolution to undertake the office to which he was appointed by God, notwithstanding his foreknowledge of the difficulties and dangers attending it*. The consistency of these two views of it may appear by considering that the prophetic signs of Christ's future temptations were samples of those temptations; for during the course of his ministry he was tempted to the very same conduct as he was now; that is, he was urged to use his miraculous power for his own personal relief, for the more ostentatious display of his divine commission, and for the acquisition of worldly empire. There was, I own, some considerable difference in the two cases; but not such as prevented the signs or samples of Christ's future temptations from giving a present occasion to the discovery of his piety and virtue. Let us now attend to the objections, which, even supposing them to be unanswerable, do not overthrow the main principles of the Inquiry.

VI.

It is observed in the Inquiry †, “That the appear-

* See above, p. 90.

† P. 2, &c.

ance of the devil to our Saviour *in person*, could serve no other end than to create a prejudice against his proposals; and consequently that this circumstance was unsuitable to the allowed policy of this wicked spirit, who, if he wished to succeed, would not have urged his temptations in a manner the most likely to prevent their success, and which could not but abate their force upon a virtuous disposition." Instead of answering this objection, some content themselves with retorting it, by pleading, "That the *apprehended* presence of Satan in vision, would produce the same general effect as his *real* presence at any other time."

This is an observation which we are not at all concerned to dispute; for, though true in itself, it is foreign from the purpose. It is acknowledged, that both his apprehended and his real presence would create upon a good mind a prejudice against his proposals. And for this reason, it would have been impolitic in Satan, to have made his appearance before Christ either in person or in vision, if he meant thereby to recommend his proposals. But what would have been absurd in this malignant spirit, whose business it is to *seduce*, was a wise conduct in the Deity (the author of this vision), because his intention was to *forewarn* Christ of his danger, and to arm him against it. It was on purpose to lead Christ to regard the present proposals (which were afterwards to occur in real life) as highly criminal in their nature, that the vision represented them as made to him
by

by the *devil*, as the temptations of that great enemy of God, whom it is virtue always to resist. Thus the very same circumstance, the appearance of the devil, which was proper in the vision, suitable both to its divine author and benevolent intention, would have been absurd upon the common hypothesis.

It is farther urged, that the reasonings employed to abate the force of the second temptation*, upon the common hypothesis, do equally affect that advanced in the Inquiry. But let us consider whether there be not a wide difference in the two cases. The reasonings here referred to, are levelled against the supposition, so commonly made by the advocates of the literal interpretation, that the devil, having assumed a human form, and transported Christ through the air from the wilderness to the top of the temple, would have persuaded him to throw himself down from thence, that by his miraculous preservation he might demonstrate his peculiar character as the Son of God. And the objection advanced in the Inquiry against this hypothesis, is, that Christ could not but easily discern, that a compliance with this proposal might not answer the end proposed by it, and might possibly issue in his dishonour; since the devil, who had already in a miraculous manner placed him upon the temple, might also by a similar act of power have thrown himself down from thence, in the human form which he then wore, without receiving any injury, and thus have destroyed the credit of the miracle by which

* Inquiry, p. 7.

Jesus was to have established his divine mission. The view with which this objection was made, was to shew, that the common hypothesis is inconsistent with the allowed policy of Satan, who would scarce have made a proposal which Christ could have no inducement to comply with, and which (though alluring in itself, yet) under these peculiar circumstances he would consider rather as an indignity than a temptation. But what relation has this objection to any thing advanced in the Inquiry? Is it asserted there, that the representations of the vision corresponded to this hypothesis; that the representative figure of the apostate angel, in particular, was a *human form*? or does the history assert or intimate this? or determine in what manner Christ was impressed with an apprehension of his presence? The objection under consideration arises entirely from a supposed state of things, which the history does not countenance, to which therefore the representations of the vision might bear no resemblance, and which might not leave room for an apprehension, that in case Christ had thrown himself down from the temple, the devil might have done the same. And so far as the representations were different from this supposed state of things, they were not liable to the same objection. In order to determine what the representations really were, we must look into the history: for, whatever is there related as matter of fact, *that* appeared to the mind of Christ as such. Now all that the history relates is, the attempt of the devil to persuade Christ,

whom

whom he had placed upon the temple, to throw himself down from thence, in a dependence upon God for his preservation, and to satisfy the Jews at once that he was the Messiah. In this *single* view the proposal was made and considered. And it was very inviting in its own nature* ; but a compliance with it would have been criminal, and therefore it was virtuously rejected. And it could be with no other view than to lead Christ to conceive of it as criminal and fit to be rejected, that the vision represents the proposal as made by Satan. So that those who make this objection, do not appear to have attended either to the true nature of the vision, or to the design of its author.

VII.

It was observed in the Inquiry†, that the offer of all the kingdoms of the world, upon the common interpretation, carried no force ; because Christ could not but know, that the devil who made it had no power to make it good. Now this objection, it is said, holds likewise against the offer in vision, if it be true, as has been all along asserted, that the representations of a vision pass for real objects, and produce the same effects as if they were. “ What difference then,” it is asked, “ with regard to Christ, could it make, whether he had a *real sight* of the devil, or a *visionary representation* of him, when he made him this offer ? ”

Those who rely on this objection seem to me not

* P. 101, 102.

† P. 9.

to attend to the wide difference which there is between judging the images or appearances of a vision to be real objects; and their having exact external archetypes. A vision may consist either of such appearances as are perfect representations or copies of objects really existing in nature, or of such as bear little or no correspondence to those objects, as we have fully shewn*. And in either case the appearances equally pass for realities. Our Saviour might have had a vision of Satan, perfectly conformable to his true nature †, or (which seems to have been the case) a representation of him with powers which he did not possess ‡. And the latter view of him would appear as real as the former; it being the nature of vision to give a seeming reality to all the objects of it, whether they have external archetypes or not. They appear to possess all the powers and properties with which they are represented §. From hence it follows, that so far as the representation of the devil in this vision was different || from his true nature, so far it

* Appendix, No. III. p. 141, note *.

† And had this been so, the objection we are considering might have held good.

‡ Just as St. John, instead of a representation of a *lamb*, agreeably to the common animals of that species, had a representation of one with seven horns and seven eyes. See App. No. III. p. 141, note *.

§ Inquiry, p. 108.

|| It is admitted, that when the internal representation is exactly conformable to any outward object (which was the case of Saul when he saw Ananias, Act. ix. 12.), there is no difference with regard to the impression they make upon the mind, between its discerning the object and the representation.

must

must make a difference with regard to Christ, whether he had a real sight or a visionary representation of him. In the former case, the third temptation had no force, because Christ knew the devil had no power to dispose of the kingdoms of the world ; in the latter, if this power be a part of the representation, the same objection cannot take place.

Now that this power did belong to the representation made of him to Christ, seems probable from several considerations. 1st. Because the history (which never describes any thing as a fact, but what appears to the mind of the prophet as such, during his vision) relates as matter of fact the promise or offer of the world made to Christ by the devil, which could not therefore but appear to be real, every representation of a vision passing for a real object. If the devil had not appeared to Christ to possess the powers he claimed ; Christ could not have seemed to himself to have had any offer or promise at all, which necessarily suppose a power to make them good. 2dly, At the same time that the devil made Christ the offer, he gave him a *sight* of all the kingdoms of the world. And Christ could no more doubt of the certainty of the former than of the latter. 3dly, His answer expresses, not any *disbelief* or *doubt* about the reality of the offer, but his abhorrence of the thought of *accepting* it. And therefore the same consideration which destroys the force of the third temptation upon the common hypothesis, does not affect the supposition of its being proposed in vision.

VIII. But

VIII.

But it is still asked, “ Might not Christ have examined into the foundation of the devil’s claim to the disposal of the world, since it is allowed that the vision did not deprive him of the exercise of his understanding?” Christ was prevented from such examination, not so much by the momentary duration of the vision, as by the very nature of its impression, which takes away all suspicion concerning its own reality. For otherwise the objects of a vision would not even *seem* to be real.

If it be farther inquired, “ How far was the mind *passive*, and how far was it *free* in its exercise, under the impressions of a vision? Ought not a line to have been drawn, to shew where its constraint ended, and where its liberty began?” I answer, This line has been already drawn. It has been shewn*, 1st, That the prophet was altogether *passive in receiving the impressions of a vision*; just as we are passive in receiving the impressions made by external objects themselves, and the ideas they raise in the mind. Here then the prophet had no liberty; he could not alter his views and persuasions concerning the objects of his vision, the impression being made by a hand too strong to be resisted. 2dly, It is also shewn†, that

* P. 85.

† P. 85—88. What is here offered, will enable us to form a judgment concerning what is advanced by Spanheim (*Dubia Evangel. dub. 55. pars iii. p. 242, 243.*), *Ille enim propriè tentari dicitur, qui sui compos est, et in ejusmodi statu in quo et judicio uti potest, et libertate*

that in every other respect the prophet had the free use of his understanding ; and therefore was as capable of a rational determination and choice, with respect to the objects of his vision, as those of bodily sight. From these premises we may draw this conclusion ; that though Christ could not alter his view of the tempting proposals or of the other representations which were now made to his mind (could not, for example, doubt the reality of the sight or offer of the world, which the devil appeared to give him), any more than he could change the appearance of external objects ; yet in resisting these proposals he might exercise his understanding, and evidence the pious disposition of his heart.

IX.

The only remaining objection which we are to examine, is this ; “ That by setting the difficulties attending the literal interpretation of this history in so strong a light, we give too much advantage to infidelity*.”

I leave it to those who urge the objection, to reconcile it either with an ardent love of truth, which naturally dictates the most impartial scrutiny into every subject, or with an honourable opinion of Christianity ; a religion which disdains the arts of worldly policy, and, nobly conscious of the validity of

libertate voluntatis ; in visione verò nec judicii nec voluntatis exercitium propriè sic dictum, adeoque nec assensus propriè nec dissensus. From the instances cited in the passages of the Inquiry referred to in the beginning of this note, it appears, that vision did not disturb either the understanding or passions of the prophet.

* This objection is in some measure obviated in the Inquiry, p. 2. 44.

its claims, submits its doctrines and credentials to universal inspection, invites and demands a rigorous examination. The timidity and policy from which this objection proceeds, would, I apprehend, have prevented our forefathers (had they been under the influence of such principles) from exposing the absurdity of any generally received opinion, founded upon the letter of Scripture. The common people, even to this day, must have entertained such gross conceptions of the Deity as cannot be mentioned without horror* ; and protestants must have spared that monster, transubstantiation. But they never failed to expose its absurdities, from a full persuasion, that however it may be favoured by the *letter*, it is certainly contrary to the true *sense* of Scripture. And they considered every objection against the literal meaning, as a reason for adopting a different interpretation. With regard to the history of our Saviour's temptation, there was a necessity for urging the objections against the received exposition, in order to prepare men to embrace that which is offered in its stead. And in taking this natural method, I had the whole world before me for a precedent in cases of the like kind. Nor can Christianity suffer any prejudice by this manner of proceeding; for, if the objections urged against the history of Christ's temptation are groundless, they may easily be refuted: and if they are well supported, they conclude only against the literal interpretation; it being a rule universally allowed in the interpretation of all authors, never to

* Appendix, No. IV. note §.

affix any sense to their words, which is either absurd in itself, or manifestly repugnant to their avowed principles, if they are fairly capable of a more rational and consistent meaning. Nor is there any room in the case before us to suggest, that we have had recourse to a figurative explication from mere necessity, and only to avoid the seeming absurdity of the literal one; for we have produced many circumstances of the history to evince that the sacred writers themselves did not, and could not design to be understood literally. Nay, all the evangelists have, in express terms, declared the whole to be a *spiritual* and mental transaction; and this is proved without offering any violence to their words, or affixing any sense to them but what they are *allowed to bear in other parts of Scripture*, and what their connexion and other circumstances necessarily require in this. Lastly, the evidence of its being a vision, is much strengthened by the rational and wise intentions of such a prophetic representation, as a prediction and forewarning of those severe trials to which Christ was afterwards to be exposed. Till the reasoning on these several points is confuted, I shall not be without some faint hope, that instead of furnishing new prejudices against the Gospel, I have removed old ones. With this view at least the argument was undertaken; and from a full persuasion that if Christianity were stripped of all disguises, and shewn in her native simplicity and beauty, just as she descended from Heaven, all objections to her divine origin would immediately vanish.

• A P P E N D I X II.

CONTAINING

A Paraphrase upon St. Matthew's Account of Christ's Temptation by the Devil, agreeably to the foregoing Explication of it.

MATTHEW IV.

1. *Then was Jesus brought into a wilderness by the Spirit, to be tempted by the devil.*

1. WHEN Jesus was appointed to his office as the great Messiah, and furnished for the execution of it by the descent of the Spirit of God in his miraculous gifts, he was brought into a wilderness by the afflatus or inspiration of that Spirit, making new revelations to him, and exhibiting extraordinary scenes before him. One great design of this prophetic vision or representation was, to give him a view of his future trials, which were couched under the figure or emblem of Satan coming to him in person, and urging temptations correspondent to those he was to meet with in the exercise of that office with which he was invested, and of those gifts with which he was endowed.

2. *And*

2. *And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, at length he was hungry.*

3. *And the tempter, coming to him, said, Inasmuch as thou art the Son of God, command these stones to become bread.*

4. *But he answered and said, Man shall not live by bread only, but by whatever proceedeth out of the mouth of God.*

2, 3. Forty days did he remain in this state without food, receiving new communications from God. The vision was then closed with the following scenes. In the first scene, the tempter came to Jesus, who at that time began to feel the keen sensation of hunger, and thus addressed him: "Inasmuch as you are the Son of God, act in character, and relieve your pressing necessities by a miracle: for, without doubt, the Messiah could turn even stones into bread."

4. To this proposal Jesus replied: "The life of man may be sustained not by bread only, but by whatever other means God shall appoint: and therefore I will not, from a distrust either of his power or goodness, undertake to supply my own wants, without an immediate warrant from Heaven." This part of the vision, while it evidenced at that time his resignation to God, and reliance on his care, was intended to convey this general instruction for the regulation of his future conduct, "That Christ,

Christ, though the Son of God, was to struggle with hunger and thirst, and all the other evils of humanity, and was never to exert his divine power for his own protection or relief, but to wait for the interposition of God in his favour."

5. *Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a wing of the temple,*

6. *And saith unto him, Inasmuch as thou art the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee, and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest thou shouldest dash thy foot against a stone.*

7. *Jesus said*

5, 6. In the second scene of this vision, the devil took Jesus to Jerusalem, the metropolis of Judea, and placed him on the wing of the temple, which commanded a view of the crowd of worshippers below, and then said to him: "Inasmuch as you are the Messiah, the Son of God, it becomes you to open your divine commission in the most conspicuous manner; and therefore throw yourself down from hence, in a dependence on the divine protection, which the Scripture promises you, and your miraculous preservation will induce the Jews to acknowledge you immediately as the Messiah, visibly descending from heaven, in a manner agreeable to their expectations."

7. Jesus on this occasion also displayed

unto him, It is also written, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.

displayed the rectitude of his temper, immediately replying, "The Scriptures to which you appeal do also admonish us not to make an improper trial of God's power; it forbids us either to rush upon danger without a call in expectation of an extraordinary deliverance, or to dictate to divine wisdom what miracles shall be wrought for men's conviction." Hereby Jesus was forewarned of the frequent temptation he would be under to an unnecessary and ostentatious display of his miraculous powers; and directed, even in bringing men to the faith, not to exceed the order of God, however called upon by the Scribes and Pharisees to give them signs from heaven.

8. *Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them :*

8, 9. Once more the scene changes, and the devil taketh Christ to an exceeding high mountain, gives him a view of all the kingdoms of the world, with all their glory, and promises to put him into the possession of them all, upon condition of his falling down and worshipping him.

9. *And*

9. *And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.*

10. *Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan : for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.*

10. This proposal was rejected the very instant it was made ; for Christ, not without a mixture of just indignation, commanded the tempter (with whom he seemed all along to converse) that moment to quit his presence ; all religious homage being justly appropriated in Scripture to God alone. This prophetic scene, while it served for the trial and discovery of his present temper, was directly intended as a presignification and warning of the like temptation to which he was to be exposed in the course of his ministry ; during which he was called upon by the Jews, who expected their Messiah under the character of a temporal monarch, to employ those miraculous powers in obtaining worldly empire, which were to be wholly consecrated to the

the erecting the kingdom of God, the kingdom of truth and righteousness amongst men.

11. *Then the devil leaveth him, and behold, angels came and ministered unto him.* ♣

11. The vision was now closed, and Satan departed from Jesus, whose animal nature being greatly exhausted by the foregoing very affecting representations, and by the want of the common supports of life in the wilderness, he received miraculous refreshment. In the course of his subsequent ministry, Christ passed through all the trials which this vision prefigured, and constantly acted upon those maxims of the divine word which he here adopted.

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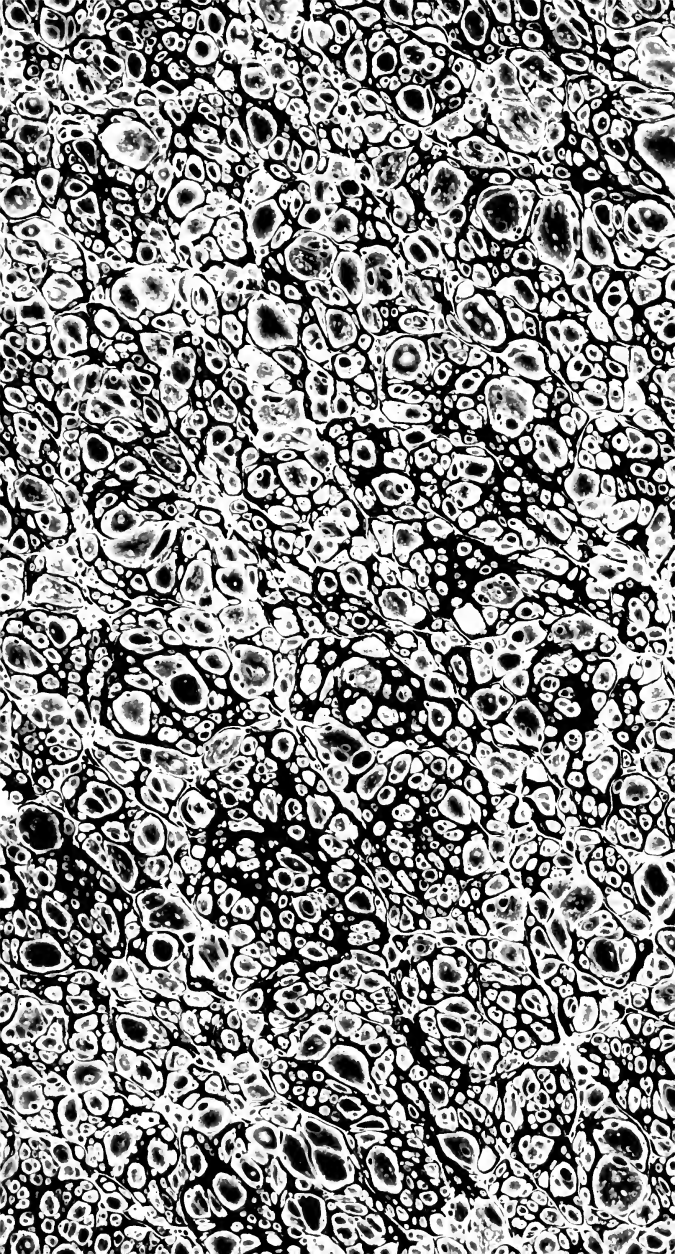
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